the weekly
Standard

MAY 8, 2000 $3.95

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In January, the Postal Service proposed that magazine readers should pay increases that are twice the average increase, three times the rate of inflation and double what's needed to cover projected costs for processing magazines.

We don't think there should be a tax on magazine readers so the Postal Service can fatten up an unspecified contingency fund or finance some experiment in e-commerce.

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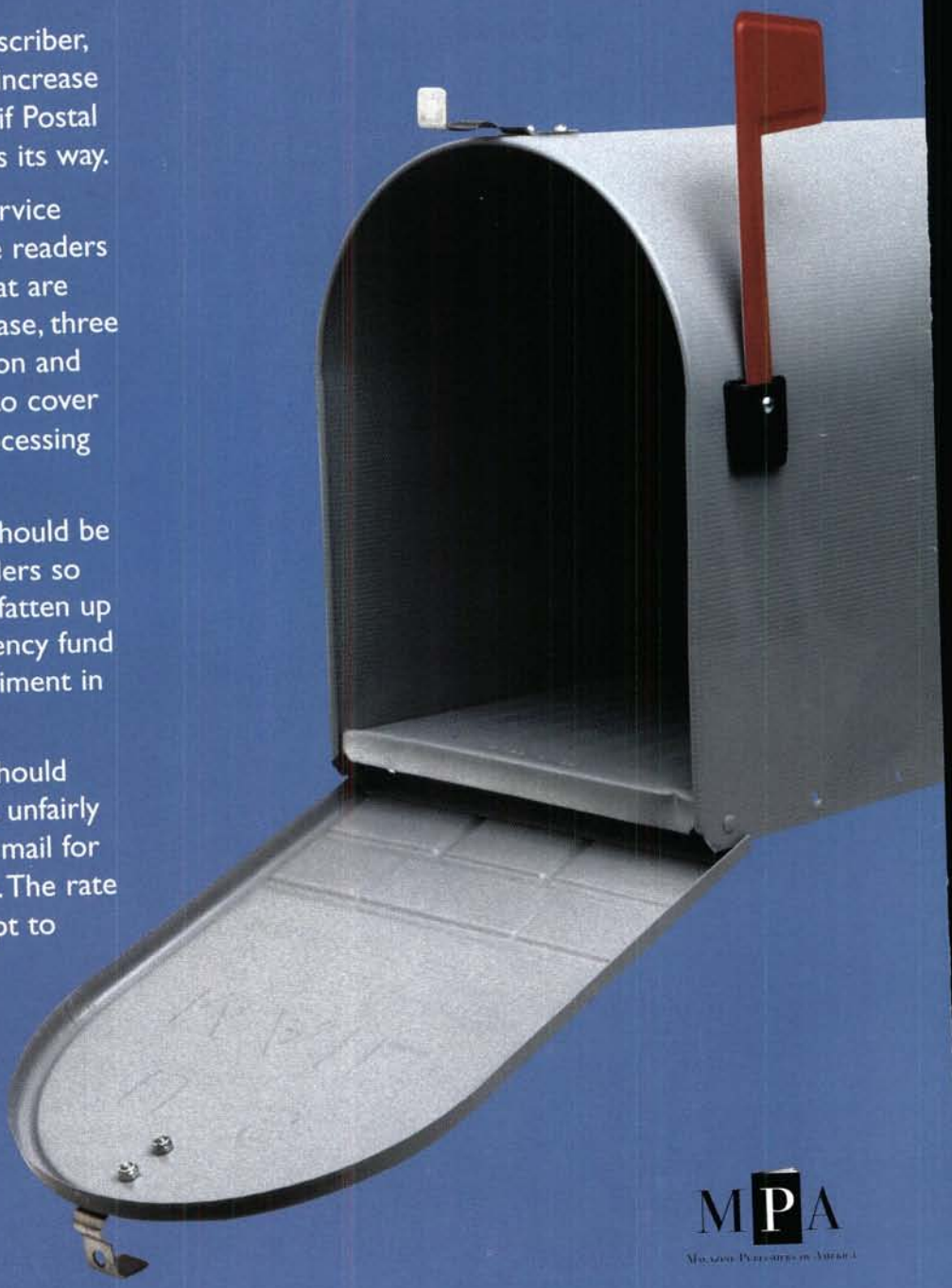

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Contents

May 8, 2000 • Volume 5, Number 32

2 Scrapbook. . . . . *Jesse Helms, Greg Craig, and Columbine.*

4 Casual. . . . . *David Skinner, thanksgiver.*

6 Correspondence. . . *On Elián, the NCC, and "multitask."*

9 Editorial . . . . . *Rule of Lies*

Cover: AP / Wide World Photos

Articles

11 No Truth, No Justice
The truth was the first casualty in the Clintonites' handling of the Elián case. . . . . . BY FRED BARNES

13 The Media Mob vs. Cuban-Americans
They're the minority group the press feels free to loathe. . . . . . BY VICTORINO MATUS

14 The Return of the Useful Idiots
Apologies for communism are not just a historical curiosity. . . . . . BY JOHN PODHORETZ

17 The Right's New Moral Equivalence
For some conservatives, confidence in America's superiority is flagging. . . . . . BY TOD LINDBERG

18 Bloody Nonsense
The Elián case reveals liberals as biological determinists. . . . . . BY DENNIS PRAGER

Features

21 The New Upper Class *How conservatives won the culture war and lost the peace.* . . . . . BY DAVID BROOKS

27 Censoring Dr. Laura *Hollywood believes in free speech until a social conservative gets a TV show.* . . . BY JAY NORDLINGER

Books & Arts

31 Bellow's Bloom *Love and friendship in* Ravelstein. . . . . BY J. BOTTUM

33 The Real Allan Bloom *A memoir.* . . . . . BY KENNETH R. WEINSTEIN

36 What I Saw at the Impeachment *Schmidt and Weisskopf on Clinton v. Starr.* . . . . . BY STEPHEN BATES

39 Art and Its Discontents *Lucian Freud's recent work.* . . . . . BY ROGER KIMBALL

40 Parody. . . . . *The second issue of* O *magazine.*

William Kristol, *Editor and Publisher* **Fred Barnes,** *Executive Editor*
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the weekly Standard

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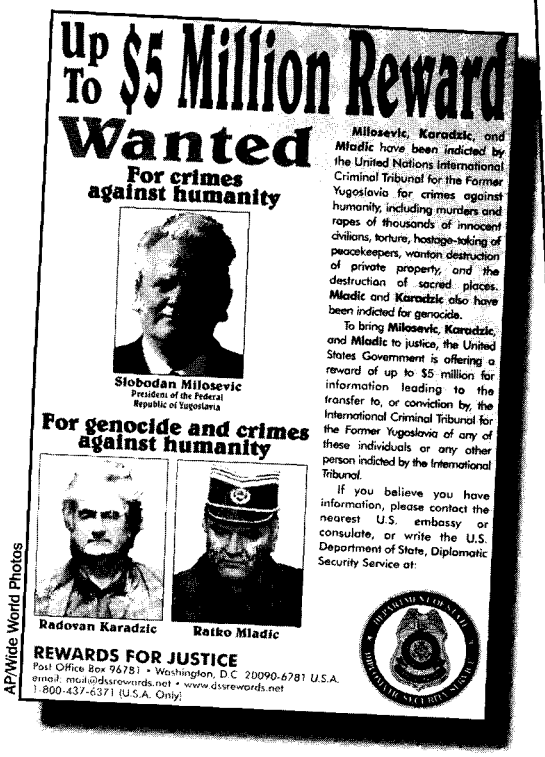
Letter of the Month

War crimes are of course no laughing matter, but that didn't stop senator Jesse Helms from penning what may be the drollest letter (reproduced at right) ever written to a secretary of state by a chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (not that there is much competition in this epistolary category).

At this writing, the criminals portrayed in the State Department's poster (below) are still at large. And, unaccountably, the reward check has not been issued. ♦



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April 3, 2000

The Honorable Madeleine Albright
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Madam Secretary:

I am fascinated by the "wanted" poster that the Department of State is placing in public buildings in Bosnia, Serbia, and other parts of Europe. The poster states that up to $5,000,000 will be paid for information leading to the transfer to, or conviction by, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia of Slobodan Milosevic, Radovan Karadzic, or Ratko Mladic.

I have the information that you are looking for.

Mr. Milosevic and Mr. Mladic both are residing in Belgrade. Mr. Milosevic recently laid a wreath at the Grave of the Unknown Soldier on Mount Avala (to mark the first anniversary of the NATO bombing of Serbia). His address is: Presidential Palace, 15 Uzicka Street, Dedinje district, Belgrade.

Mr. Mladic is apparently unaware that he should be in hiding – he took a leisurely afternoon stroll down Knez Mihailova Street on Friday, March 24, waving at Belgraders as he walked along, and was spotted just this weekend at the Belgrade stadium taking in a soccer match.

Mr. Karadzic remains in the Pale area of Bosnia – living in the midst of thousands of NATO peacekeepers – where he has been seen regularly in public in recent months.

Reward payment should be made to Rev. Franklin Graham's *Samaritan's Purse*, a well-known and highly respected charitable organization in North Carolina. (Franklin is Billy Graham's son).

Kindest regards.

Sincerely,

Jesse Helms

JESSE HELMS

cc: The Honorable Lawrence Summers
U.S. Secretary of the Treasury

Rewards for Justice
Diplomatic Security Service
U.S. Department of State

A Methodism to Their Madness

The General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) of the United Methodist Church has been raising money to pay the fees of Washington lawyer Gregory Craig—so that Craig's client, Juan Miguel González, can take his 6-year-old boy back to Castro's Cuba. But the decision has prompted a harsh and unprecedented rebuke from Methodist bishop Cornelius L. Henderson and the Florida Conference Council on Ministries. Henderson calls GBCS financial involvement with González "unilateral," "presumptuous," and an "embarrassment" to Florida Methodists—who "were not consulted," "do not feel this was wise action," and are "insulted by the action of an agency of the church to which they give their loyalty."

"It is painful to see one's church appear to lend support to a government whose record on human rights is not

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acceptable by Christian standards or the principles of the United Methodist Church," Henderson writes in a statement widely distributed (and just as widely ignored by the national media). He wants two things from his church's leadership. First, an apology. And second, stricter adherence to the "Social Principles" of Methodism's "Book of Discipline"—in particular, section 68, chapter V, paragraph A, which obliges congregants to condemn and oppose all regimes (unmistakably including Castro's dictatorship) which abuse or ignore universal political and human rights.

THE SCRAPBOOK wishes Henderson well, but doesn't suppose he should hold his breath, especially about that last part.

Consider the latest missive from Foundry United Methodist Church of Washington, D.C. (which counts Bill and Hillary Clinton among its semi-regular parishioners). "Grace to you and peace," writes Mark A. Schaefer of the Foundry Democracy Project. He writes about "not some abstract political issue" but a real "moral issue that we as United Methodists and American Citizens should be concerned about," namely: Washington's delegate to Congress, Eleanor Holmes Norton, doesn't get to vote on the floor of the House.

And why should Methodists, in particular, be exercised about this state of affairs? Well, Schaefer notes, there's . . . section 68, chapter V, paragraph A of Methodism's "Social Principles," that's why: The "form and the leaders of all governments should be determined by exercise of the right to vote guaranteed to all adult citizens." And according to Schaefer, Cuba, unlike the United States, already permits this basic liberty. "Washington is . . . the only democratic capitol [sic] whose citizens are unrepresented in their national legislature. Even the people of the cities of Beijing, Havana, and Tehran have voting representation in their legislatures!" ♦

Columbine Souvenir

Last week, Jefferson County (Colorado) Attorney Frank Hutfless began selling grisly videotapes of the aftermath of the Columbine High School massacre—for $25 a copy. Survivors, relatives of the dead, and school officials were aghast and enraged at the tasteless move. THE SCRAPBOOK shares their dismay. All the more so now that the origins of some of the footage have been clarified by Hutfless and his associates. It seems a Littleton, Colorado, Fire Department employee recorded tape of the high school's cafeteria and library: bullet-pocked walls, blood-stained floors, note cards marking the locations of bodies. It also seems that the fire department has used this tape in "training sessions" for law enforcement officials in 32 states and Canada.

THE SCRAPBOOK hopes that none of them supervises an emergency-response team in your neighborhood. For as David B. Kopel recently explained in these pages, "Heavily armored police with machine guns protected themselves, instead of rescuing teenagers who were being murdered a few yards away." The Columbine response is not a proper "training" model for anyone. The tape should be pulled. ♦

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Casual

The Mail Animal

My wife (an office she's held for all of a month now) asked me if I would help out with the thank you notes for our wedding presents. Tradition holds this is the bride's responsibility, but, being a modern guy, I agreed to lend a hand. Which is when the writer's block set in. My mind reeled at all the problems I faced. How to discreetly thank people who'd given us money? How to avoid sounding ridiculous while praising a gift we had selected ourselves and put on our own registry? What to say to the two or three people I know who are themselves master note-writers? And what about those to whom much more than a short note is owed?

All these worries hit me before I'd penned a single *muchas gracias*. Paralyzed, I turned to the experts, on hand in the form of several piles of books and magazines put out by the wedding industry.

For the most part, they advised euphemism and gushiness. If you're thanking someone for money, whatever you do, don't mention money; call it a "generous gift." If you're thanking someone for a present you consider ugly, call it "interesting," "unique," "bold," or (no kidding) a "conversation piece."

Usually they recommended kindness, but not always. *The Bride's Thank You Note Handbook*, easily the dimmest-witted of the books I perused, provides a sample note under the heading "The Gift That Must Be Exchanged." It thanks "Diane" for "beautiful crystal decanters" and goes on, "We truly hate to part with them and only wish we didn't need something so unaesthetic as a vacuum cleaner." Clearly it would be preferable to lie.

This particular guide has over a hundred sample missives, covering a seemingly exhaustive range of gifts, but many of the notes are rendered useless by comments no sane person would actually make. Thus, acknowledging some football tickets, a bride enthuses, "I adore the sport," adding, "The television broadcasts leave out the hot dogs, coffee, and colorful excitement of being there. Your gift has really scored a touchdown with us." Who says "television broadcasts"? And who drinks coffee at a football game?

Darren Gygi

Perhaps a bride is supposed to be embarrassed to admit she'd have a beer. That would be in keeping with the atmosphere of unreality these authors believe thank you notes should convey. Saying a gift is nice or attractive is never enough. A camera is a lifesaver: "Until its arrival we didn't know how we were going to record our honeymoon." A cocktail shaker is the key to a successful social life: "I predict your bar accessories will make us the most popular host and hostess in town."

No exclamation point is ever deemed over the top; no kitchen appliance is merely useful. "The food processor is marvelous! In two days, it's whipped up two malteds, eight flapjacks, and four helpings of mousse." In a sample note in *Emily Post's Complete Book of Wedding Etiquette*, a vase "looks like it was made for our mantle and we have already put it to use holding a bouquet of daffodils." In wedding-guide land, every single gift fits with freakish perfection into the house and lives of its recipients.

Unfortunately, the more I read, the loopier I felt, and the more determined to leave my mark on the literature of thank you notes. Soon I was scribbling—you could even say hitting my stride:

First let me compliment your excellent taste in flatware. Fortunately, several other guests of ours have shown a similarly elevated aesthetic sense and given us place settings in the exact same style. . . .

We are so glad you could make it to the wedding. And thanks for the dough, which has really been helpful in paying Cynthia the stipend I promised her when she became my wife. . . .

Cynthia informs me that you gave us China as a wedding present. What were you thinking?! Taiwan would have been more than generous. A small European nation, maybe. . . .

Thanks for your generous gift. We have already deposited it in our emergency bail-bond account. The wife is always getting herself into little scrapes. . . .

Though no longer blocked, I find I am still struggling with the more formal notes. But I can promise one thing: No relative, friend, or colleague of mine is going to be thanked for giving us a "conversation piece."

David Skinner

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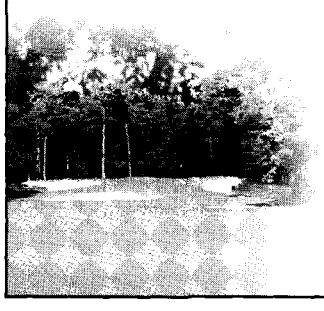

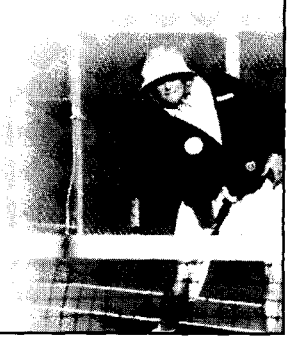

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L'Affaire González

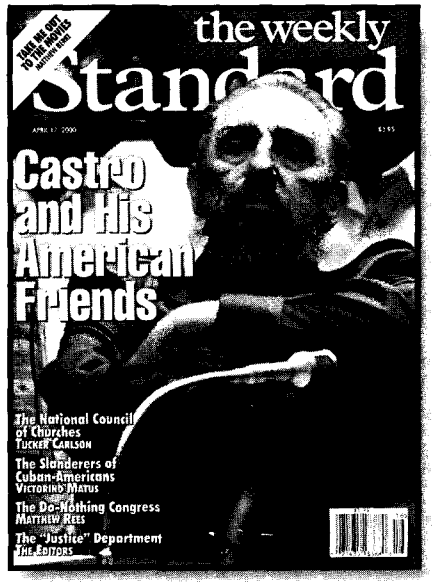
The Weekly Standard is to be commended for its excellent coverage of the Elián González controversy. Your editorials and articles, unlike so much other coverage, address the real issues involved. Most importantly, will the United States hand over a six-year-old child to a totalitarian dictatorship? This is what the González case boils down to. It is not a question of parental rights, but a question of whether Elián González will grow up in a free society or a slave state. As you have shown, the Cuban constitution explicitly gives the state's political interests preference over any parental rights. We are not turning Elián over to his father, but rather Fidel Castro.

My own conversations with the deport-Elián crowd have revealed a remarkable lack of discernment and compassion on their part. They insist that this is a child-custody case like any other. They express anger and resentment at Elián's mother for getting her child out of Cuba, and anger and resentment at Elián's relatives for treating him well (they have given him toys and taken him to Disney World! How decadent!). Unbelievably, they have even expressed anger and resentment against Elián himself, calling him spoiled and "macho."

There is also an amazing pro-Communist slant to the arguments of the deport-Elián crowd. They simply do not recognize or appreciate the difference between a free society and a totalitarian one. They compare the differences between Cuba and the United States to the differences between California and Alabama. They believe that, because the United States is not perfect, we Americans cannot rightfully draw a distinction between our nation and totalitarian states such as Cuba. I was even asked by one individual, "Well, what is so wrong about communism anyway?"

It boggles my mind that anyone, having seen the evidence of the Gulag in the former Soviet Union, of Maoism in China, and of Pol Pot's genocide in Cambodia, can ask such a question. It is akin to asking, "What is so wrong about Nazism anyway?" When someone mentions the truth about communism, he is confronted with one of the tiredest anti-anti-Communist cusswords: "McCarthyite."

In my religious denomination, the Presbyterian Church (USA), a big human rights issue for many of us is the treatment of gays and lesbians. Our liberal wing considers the denial of ordination rights to gays and lesbians a violation of their human rights. Without addressing the merits of that particular question, I must say I find it bizarre that many of these same liberal Protestants have never raised their voices against the treatment of gays in Cuba. As your recent article regarding the National Council of Churches ("The National Council of Castro Worshippers," April 17) notes, AIDS sufferers in Cuba, many of whom are gay, have been quarantined. And other gays have been sent to labor camps.



Apparently, this weird love affair with one of the world's last remaining Communist dictatorships induces in some people, including some Christians, a peculiar blindness to reality. To paraphrase Margaret Thatcher, the apologists for Fidel Castro who wish to deport Elián González are "living in cloud cuckoo land."

John Ertheim
Princeton, NJ

Last week's editorial by Christopher Caldwell ("Elián Should Stay," April 10) was outstanding! It is about time a journalist wrote about the truth in Communist Cuba. Are Americans so selfish that they do not want to help a boy who barely survived? I pray that our do-nothing Congress will stand up for Elián and realize that he is not going home to his father, he is going home to Cuba.

Lara Barrera
Centreville, VA

I just received the April 24/May 1, 2000 issue of The Weekly Standard and read with some amazement Christopher Caldwell's editorial titled "Lázaro González: American Hero." I have admired your magazine for some time. While I wouldn't describe myself as a conservative, I am a registered Republican and retired executive of a major insurance company. I don't think most fair-minded people would categorize me as a left-leaning liberal.

What amazed me most about your editorial was the claim that the government was colluding with Castro. It's outrageous claims like this that have lost the last two elections for the Republican party and will most likely lose the presidency and both houses of Congress in this year's election.

The venom of conservatives against Castro and Clinton is so strong it overwhelms common sense. Lázaro González is anything but an American hero. In reality he's a tool of the Cuban expatriates who have never been able to swallow the Bay of Pigs debacle and will do anything to embarrass Castro. It's very hard for me to believe that Lázaro is making any decisions. I've seen (by rough count) two dozen attorneys claiming to represent the family along with leaders of every Cuban-American organization in Florida, all more than willing to jump in front of television cameras at every opportunity to advance their agendas.

This family, as far as Elián is concerned, is not his family. "Distant relatives" would have been a more appropriate term. No sane parent would exhibit this child day and night in front of highly emotional crowds as the family has done. This boy is being used as a pawn to advance the political objectives of the Cuban community in Florida.

This is the same community that lived contentedly under Batista, a monumental thief, despot, and pillager, but ran when Castro took control. Faced with a choice

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between the two, I would take Castro with all his warped thinking.

The Cuban community is just waiting for Castro to disappear from the scene to rush back to their homeland and confiscate the government. With no serious opposition party presently there, they will most likely succeed.

If your editorial represents mainstream Republican thinking, it's time for me to change my political affiliation.

ALBERT MAUCERI
Charlotte, NC

NCC AND COMPANY

TUCKER CARLSON PROVIDES a public service by describing the "disgraceful behavior" of the National Council of Churches (NCC) in the Elián González case ("The National Council of Castro Worshippers," April 17). The NCC, however, is not alone. It is part of a vast left-wing conspiracy (to stand Hillary Clinton's phrase on its head) against the industrialized north, particularly the United States. The left's agenda includes efforts to temper capitalism and redistribute global wealth. Members of faith-based organizations serve as soldiers in the struggle against capitalism, while leaders of the new leftist movement remain in the shadows.

The NCC is the U.S. element of the Geneva-based World Council of Churches (WCC). The WCC boasts of 500 million Christian members in 120 countries. It has funded projects at Amsterdam's notorious Transnational Institute, the overseas arm of the Washington, D.C.-based Institute for Policy Studies, which considers transnational corporations capitalist forces that "oppress the poor and keep them under domination." Soviet KGB agent Alexsi Sergeyevich Buyersky took an active role in the 1970s and 1980s on the WCC's central committee by helping draft policy statements. According to the Mitrokhin Archive, "As late as 1989 . . . following the secret implementation of 'a plan approved by the KGB leadership,' the WCC executive and central committee adopted public statements (eight) and messages (three) which corresponded to the political direction of the Socialist countries."

The Riverside Church in New York is also intertwined with the NCC. They share the same building and support each other's policy sessions and action programs. The NCC's North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA), for example, worked with the Riverside Church on liberation theology initiatives. David Horowitz writes in *Radical Son* that "the NACLA group . . . proudly described itself as an intelligence operation for revolutionary movements in Latin America."

Another of Castro's fellow travelers is the New York-based Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO). That group's director served at the NCC in the 1970s, and one of its board members serves on the church council of the Riverside Church. IFCO has delivered more than 1,000 tons of aid to Castro and sends volunteer work brigades ("Venceremos") to Cuba. "It behooves us as friends of Cuba," an IFCO policy statement says, "to dispel the myth that the [U.S.] blockade has been relaxed and that it is anything less than genocidal."

Little Elián González, soon to be immersed in Marxist-Leninist principles Cuban style, has been played like a pitiful pawn by a new left masquerading as "progressives." Hillary Clinton's whining two years ago of a "vast right-wing conspiracy" no longer sounds like an off-the-wall comment. We can now see that the first lady was simply projecting onto her enemies the existing left-wing conspiracy of which she is a prominent member.

ROBERT W. CHANDLER
McLean, VA

NOT IN MY HOLY HOUSE

I HAVE JUST FINISHED reading John Podhoretz's review of the movie *Keeping the Faith* ("Hollywood's Bad Joke," April 17). A little interesting note on it:

The producers of the film wanted to use our synagogue, Ohab Zedek, for the synagogue scenes. Our rabbi demanded to see the screenplay before agreeing to the deal. Upon reading it, he explained that under no conditions would he permit our synagogue to be used in any way, shape, or form in the making of this movie.

Undaunted, the producers went to another synagogue known for its radical politics, which accepted their offer. The controversy there was over the use of non-union labor in the making of the film.

SHLOMO BAR-AYAL
New York, NY

MULTIPLICITY

JOSEPH EPSTEIN RAGES against the word "multitasking" in his April 10 Casual ("Multitask, Don't Ask"). While it may be new to his ear, it's a precise term used in the computer processing fields at least since the early 1980s. It describes the capability of a computer and operating system to perform multiple individual tasks from the same or different programs interleaved and is a more complex capability than simple multiprogramming.

Epstein's mother talking on a phone while cooking may mean that her mind is involved in one or the other at any given microsecond, but externally it appears that both are happening together. A multitasking capability would mean that one part of the mind is doing the cooking while another talks on the phone, a distinct possibility.

The point is that the word multitasking is a valid term and has now been extended into the popular vocabulary, sometimes correctly and sometimes incorrectly. The fact that it may occasionally be used incorrectly does not make it any more invalid than such words as "epitome" (a good example, but not the ultimate).

MACLAY GEARHART
Albuquerque, NM

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the weekly Standard

Rule of Lies

Last week, Juan Miguel González filed a motion with the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals asking to be given the sole right to speak for his son Elián. The motion characterized Lázaro González, Juan Miguel's uncle, as an "intruder and uninvited meddler in Elián's life." His Miami relatives, Juan Miguel argued, had subjected Elián to "outrageous treatment." He, by contrast, wanted only the "chance to provide Elián all the love and devotion he deserves."

The court shot him down. How could it not? If Lázaro, Elián's closest relative in the United States, had not "intruded"—especially when Elián's father greeted the news of his son's near-drowning by sitting on his duff 90 miles away and bellowing threats over a state-controlled propaganda network for almost half a year—Elián would have wound up in an orphanage. There is only one thing a civilized man in Juan Miguel's position would say to his uncle in Miami, and that is: *Thank you*.

The president and attorney general insisted on settling a complex custody battle by fiat. They used state power to flout the law.

We stress, as always, that we do not believe Juan Miguel is necessarily as heartless as his public pronouncements would imply. Nor do we make any comment on his decency or his fitness as a father. But he is a subject of a Communist dictatorship—and at the heart of the Elián González case has always been the need to find out whether Juan Miguel is capable of speaking his own mind. The way to find that out is in a court of law.

The Clinton administration must have had the same intuition itself, for it has spent the five months since Elián was rescued lauding "the rule of law." But Bill Clinton and Janet Reno seem to have had a hard time distinguishing between law and decree, and whenever the law has gone against them, they have just rolled right over it. Reno explained last week: "We had started out early on when the matters were first developing to say, look, we will agree to the appeals process if you will agree to peacefully turn the child over at the conclusion of the process." But what if the Miami Gonzálezes were to win their appeal? Translated out of legalese, Reno's bargain amounts to: *We will abide by the law if you renounce your rights under it*. The same concept of the law as an arena for bullying could be found in the 11th Circuit's April 19 denial of a custody transfer. The INS, according to the Court, "said it would consent to an injunction requiring the INS to bar Plaintiff's departure from the United States if this Court also entered an order directing Lázaro González to present Plaintiff to the INS. . . . We decline to proceed in that manner."

We think that rebuff was the reason for the middle-of-the-night raid that "reunited" Elián González with his father. Resorting to a fantasy jurisprudence, President Clinton claimed he had acted to uphold the 11th Circuit's decision—when the court actually had *refused to consider* the administration's request that Elián be transferred to Juan Miguel's care.

A mix of duplicity and propaganda followed. Reno said the raid occurred at "the most appropriate time with the least crowd"—appropriate because Elián's friends and extended family had been at worship on Good Friday, the most solemn day of the Christian calendar. Elián was arrested as an illegal alien—which he never was, until the administration *declared* him one, without due process, on April 12. The administration claimed to have a "report" that guns were in the house—but didn't mention that report in either of the two fishy warrants with which it justified the raid. Reno's deputy Eric Holder later claimed he "didn't know" whether any guns had been found. Yeah, sure. Reno claims protesters "tried to throw ropes around the agents as they came up to the house." Is Ms. Reno that ignorant of the raid she herself unleashed, or is she lying? Those weren't ropes. They were TV cables, belonging to the NBC cameraman who was decked by arriving SWAT teams even before they had found Elián. Apparently the message Juan Miguel's lawyer Greg Craig faxed to TV stations 10 hours before the raid—"We appeal to your humanity and to your decency to resist the invitation from Lázaro González and others in Miami to further exploit this young boy"—was in danger of being treated as a suggestion rather than an order.

The pre-raid negotiations, which Reno conducted by

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telephone with coaching from Gregory Craig, were an extralegal sham. Reno treated law-abiding citizens as if they had hijacked an airplane: Keep them talking, and lull them. Accounts of the negotiations by independent mediators from the University of Miami make clear that only nugatory differences separated the sides when the men with submachine guns knocked down the doors. Reno calls that "law enforcement that went the right way." But what law was being enforced? After weeks of attacking Lázaro González for being "in violation of the law," the government pressed no charges, citing a desire to "put this behind us." But that's because there were no charges to be pressed.

Then Elián was sequestered at Andrews Air Force Base, before getting moved to the government's Wye Plantation conference center. Although whether Elián stays in the United States or goes back to Cuba had not yet been decided in any court of law we've heard of, the administration set to work reacculturating Elián to his native island. It welcomed playmates, teachers, and psychiatrists who'd been sent on their way by Fidel Castro in Havana. It invited the granddaughter of former National Council of Churches head Joan Brown Campbell and the son of a Cuban diplomat, not to mention 10 Cuban government officials who arrived on Easter Sunday with what was described as a delivery.

Barred were any Americans who've had anything to do with Elián over the last five months. Not just his Miami family, but also his best Miami friend, Lazarito Martell, all independent journalists, and New Hampshire senator Bob Smith. Under what law is a U.S. senator barred from a military base? It was hard to tell, because no one would come clean on who was in charge. Presidential spokesman Joe Lockhart referred the question to Justice, but Janet Reno told University of Miami mediator Carlos Saladrigas that she had "no knowledge of who was with the child, and no authority to limit access to the child." Asked point-blank by a journalist at last Thursday's press conference, Reno refused to disclose Justice's role, claiming it was being litigated in 11th Circuit proceedings. (It's not.) So is Elián under arrest? If so, who's holding him? Who picks the guest list? Does Juan Miguel? Does Cuba?

The government's use of psychiatrists to reinforce its fiat is reminiscent of Cuba, and ought to be a scandal for the mental-health profession. Irwin Redlener, a partisan rent-an-expert who worked for the Clinton campaign in 1992 and served on Hillary Clinton's Health Care Task Force, warned that Elián was "in a state of imminent danger to his physical and emotional well-being in a home that I consider to be psychologically abusive."

Paulina Kernberg, also retained by the government, revealed that Elián played with toy soldiers without anxiety. Ergo it's "likely he suffered no lasting harm from the armed raid." Elián's beloved cousin Marisleysis, Kernberg says, "may be an idealized love, rather than a maternal figure." Of course, visits from the Miamians "would not be advisable in their current angry state." In fact, the whole family "may benefit from counseling." Why? "To aid them in accepting and supporting Elián's reunion with his father."

Meanwhile, the feelings of Jerry Wiener, ex-president of the American Psychiatric Association, were described this way in the *New York Times*: "He and other experts said Cuba, where Elián may eventually return, has a sophisticated system of psychiatric care and many highly trained child psychiatrists." As Freedom House and other human rights organizations have noted, that psychiatric "sophistication" generally gets applied—and brutally—when opponents of the regime are being interrogated.

Bringing up Cuba's Communist reign of terror in any of this is taken to be in bad taste. It doesn't really matter, anyway, according to the *Wall Street Journal*'s Al Hunt. "Today's Cuba is a miserably governed country," Hunt writes, "which is why Castroism won't survive the 72-year-old dictator. . . . If he goes back, Elián won't spend most of his life growing up under Castro." Really? How do we know? Lenin governed badly, but communism continued after his death for six decades. Of course, if Mr. Hunt can get Fidel's resignation written into Elián's repatriation agreement, we might look at the whole case differently.

The president and attorney general—for reasons that are unclear, but which certainly involve dealings with Castro—insisted on settling a complex custody battle by fiat, while trying to dupe the public into believing the administration was merely a neutral observer. They got half of what they sought—at the price of introducing a bit of Cuban-style authoritarianism into American political life. It now appears all but certain Elián will be heading back to Cuba. We may never know whether that was Juan Miguel's wish for his child. But in its use of state power to flout the law, the administration has been caught red-handed.

The 11th Circuit has issued an injunction against Elián's leaving the country or taking refuge in any property that has diplomatic immunity. Who speaks for Elián on asylum matters remains a live legal issue. Settling it could require a custody discussion that would allow us to distinguish Juan Miguel's motives from Fidel Castro's. This would be a reasonable outcome. After all, the two sides in this matter are not (a) Elián stays and (b) Elián goes. They're (a) Elián gets his day in court, and (b) Elián gets whisked out of the country with no questions asked.

But we hold out little hope Elián will get his day in court, regardless of how the 11th Circuit rules. We now know—thanks to their conduct before, during, and after the morning of April 22—how the president and the attorney general react when the law turns against them. They will break the law, if need be, to force Elián González back to Cuba, all the while claiming to uphold it.

—Christopher Caldwell, for the Editors

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No Truth, No Justice

The truth was the first casualty in the Clintonites' handling of the Elián case.

BY FRED BARNES

Drew Friedman

HERE'S WHAT attorney general Janet Reno would like you to believe: that she actually *wanted* television cameras and photographers to record the commando raid that plucked Elián González from his relatives' home in Miami. To avoid any charges of a coverup, she decided that agents should not block photographers or obstruct the TV cameras at the González house from doing their job. The deaths at the Branch Davidian complex in Waco, Texas, in 1993 are still painful to Reno, her aides told the *Washington Post*, and she's been accused of covering up what really happened there when federal agents staged a raid. So, her aides said, this led her to err on the side of openness in Miami. "She did not want allegations of a coverup to surround any aspect of the Elián González case," according to her aides.

Now here's what actually happened: The only TV cameraman who tried to cover the seizure of Elián inside the house was beaten, maced, threatened, and thus prevented from recording the event. "It wasn't a pretty sight," NBC cameraman Tony Zumbado said. "I was kicked in the stomach and pushed down and they kind of like put their foot on my back and told me not to move or else they were going to shoot." The result was no TV coverage. An AP photographer, Alan Diaz, raced around to the back of the house, entered, and got the picture of an armed Immigration and Naturalization Service agent pointing his assault weapon in Elián's direction. But the photographer was aided by the González family, not by anyone working for Reno.

What we have here is a lie or something awfully close to it. For Reno, the presence of the press was a given. She couldn't deal with it by forcing reporters and cameramen to pack up and leave the area. She didn't control Little Havana, and she didn't have the cooperation of those who did, the Miami police. Besides, driving the media away would have alerted the González family that an attempt to

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seize Elián was imminent, allowing them to flee with the boy. Also, if Reno had been truly interested in letting the media show that everything she did was on the up-and-up, there was a perfect time for this. A press photographer or two could have been allowed to take post-raid pictures of Elián and his father at Andrews Air Force Base. But, of course, only Greg Craig, the lawyer bent on sending Elián back to Cuba, took pictures. When released, his pictures provoked a debate over whether they were staged, exactly what Reno supposedly wanted to avoid.

The spin about open press coverage is but one of many false or deceptive statements by the Clinton administration, including by President Clinton himself, to justify, explain, or mitigate the Miami raid. The deceptions involved small points, such as whether the INS commando who found Elián actually pointed his gun at the boy. Reno said not, but you can check the cover of this magazine and decide for yourself. A larger falsehood was the claim that the González family had guns in their house, which would justify the tremendous show of force by INS agents. After the raid, Reno said she had "received information that there were guns . . . perhaps in the house." A Reno assistant cited a vague statement by Elián's cousin, Marisleysis González, about there being "more than just cameras in the house." The González family insisted they had no guns in the house, INS agents found none, and an INS official who briefed reporters five days after the raid said that, in fact, there had been no reports of guns there.

To buttress Reno, President Clinton appeared on the South Lawn of the White House hours after the raid and asserted that "every conceivable alternative was tried." In truth, no alternatives were tried. The González family said repeatedly they would not resist if officials came to the house for Elián. No INS official showed up—until the armed assault. Juan Miguel González, Elián's father, told Bill Press of CNN the night before the raid that he was ready and willing to go to the González home on his own. Craig, his attorney, said the same. They were warned against that by Justice officials. Meanwhile, negotiations over Elián between Reno and Miami leaders were going on when the raid took place. Reno said the talks were stymied; the leaders said they were near an agreement. Reno claimed the González family would not yield custody of Elián. The leaders said the family had agreed in writing and cited specific language in a document signed by family members and sent to Reno. No doubt Sister Jeanne O'Laughlin, who at Reno's request had hosted Elián and his grandmothers in her home, would if asked have invited Elián's father, the Gonzálezes from Miami, and Elián to live in her home for a period of joint custody.

Both Clinton and Reno asserted the "rule of law" mandated their actions, notably the raid. Of course, it required nothing of the kind.

Clinton uttered another untruth. He declared repeatedly that he had "done my best to avoid politicizing" the case. In fact, he did nothing to depoliticize it except leave the public handling of the matter to Reno, not the White House. And because she made it her top priority, it became all the more political. What could Clinton have done? He could have stuck with the administration's first inclination, which was to treat the case as a custody issue to be decided in state court, where both sides would be heard. Absent that, Clinton could have kept the case out of Washington by putting the U.S. attorney in Miami in charge. He could have instructed INS to grant Elián's bid for an asylum hearing. Instead, the administration is fighting the request in hopes of quickly sending him back to Cuba. Still another option would have been to give Elián permanent resident alien status by executive action, which would have allowed him to stay in the United States but wouldn't have barred him from returning to Cuba.

Both Clinton and Reno asserted the "rule of law" mandated their actions, notably the raid. It required nothing of the kind. The law didn't require the case to be handled as a federal matter. Clinton and Reno decided that. Reno said the González family was required to turn over Elián, which is true. But the law did not require them to go to the Opa-Locka Airport and hand over Elián, as Reno ordered. It merely required them to release Elián to his father or INS agents. And Reno was not backed up by a court order from the federal judge involved in the case. She only had an arrest warrant, signed by one of her aides, and a search warrant issued by a magistrate. Both were based on the erroneous notion that Elián is an "illegal alien." Moreover, the legality of INS's refusal to give Elián an asylum hearing is very much in doubt. A three-judge federal appeals panel indicated INS was flat wrong in doing so.

For Clinton, the most egregious lie was a personal one to Democratic senator Bob Graham of Florida in early April. The senator was fearful of the impact of a nighttime raid on the Cuban-American community in Miami and asked Clinton to promise not to allow one. Clinton turned to his chief of staff, John Podesta, to see if such a promise was appropriate, then made the promise. After the raid, White House press secretary Joe Lockhart denied the president had done so. But Graham noted that Lockhart was not in the Oval Office at the time, and Clinton didn't dispute Graham. It turned out Clinton wasn't alone in saying a raid in the dead of night wouldn't occur. Deputy attorney general Eric Holder had said so, too. When confronted about this by Tim Russert of *Meet the Press*, Holder gave the perfect Clintonian response. The raid wasn't at night, he said, it was "just before dawn." ♦

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The Media Mob vs. Cuban-Americans

They're the minority group the press feels free to loathe. BY VICTORINO MATUS

THE SAGA OF ELIÁN GONZÁLEZ has been a gripping one for everyone, it would seem, except members of the press. They have almost universally loathed the story, reserving special contempt for Cuban-Americans. Thomas Friedman, for one, could barely contain himself last week. In fact, he didn't: "Yup, I gotta confess," said the *New York Times* columnist, "that now-famous picture of a U.S. marshal in Miami pointing an automatic weapon toward Donato Dalrymple and ordering him in the name of the U.S. government to turn over Elián González warmed my heart." Cuban-Americans, he said, believed "they could get away with kidnapping Elián. America is a lot better off today because Janet Reno taught them otherwise."

When asked by the *Washington Post*'s Howard Kurtz what sort of impact the photo of Elián at gunpoint might have, James Warren, Washington bureau chief of the *Chicago Tribune*, said "It will ignite all the crazies. . . ." Warren explained that he would be arguing against front-page coverage in his paper of "the crazy family running around here all day and bitching on television."

That's probably an accurate assessment of how most reporters view the case: not as a struggle to keep a six-year-old boy in a free country but as an embarrassing waste of time that could otherwise be devoted to high-toned political analysis. "It's the dumbest thing I've ever covered," *New York Times* Miami bureau chief Rick Bragg confessed to Knoxville's *Metro Pulse*. "Some people think hell is a place where you wake up in the morning in a bed of coals. I think it's where you wake up and find out you'll be writing about Elián for the next 643 days."

The New York *Daily News*, meanwhile, is relieved that the boy is away from "the Miami mob scene," safe from those "anti-Castro fanatics" and relatives who "used him so shamelessly." The newspaper mocks Elián's cousin Marisleysis—who took leave from her job to care for the boy after he almost drowned off the Florida coast last Thanksgiving—joking that "One waits for [her] to see the face of the Virgin in the Potomac."

Legal scholars—even liberal ones like Laurence Tribe and Alan Dershowitz—may argue that the Fourth Amendment is supposed to protect Americans against executive-branch home invasions, but for editorialists, Janet Reno deserved the benefit of the doubt: After all, those crazy relatives were just asking for it.

"If Elián's Miami relatives had cared more about the boy's welfare than in using him as a political trophy in the propaganda war against Fidel Castro, they would have sent him back to his father weeks ago," the *St. Petersburg Times* intoned. Elián, it went on, "was manipulated and brainwashed by his Miami relatives. . . . [They had] abused this child long enough." The *San Francisco Chronicle*, too, thought it was about time someone stamped out public dissent: "Given the circumstances—recalcitrant relatives vowing

Victorino Matus is an associate editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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to defy the law, feverish crowds in Little Havana blockading the streets and local authorities with questionable resolve to prevent civil unrest—Reno had little choice." Though the effect of the Justice Department raid was to alter by force the facts of a pending federal court case only two weeks before a ruling, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* still managed to defend the raid as a reminder that "this is a nation of laws, not of guns or mobs."

Given the extent to which the media shared Bragg's view that hell meant having to cover the Elián beat, there was no doubt a measure of self interest in reporters' sympathy for the Clinton administration's armed raid. *The Early Show*'s Bryant Gumbel, in a fawning interview with INS representative Robert Menendez, asked what, if anything, congressional hearings would accomplish "besides just so much Reno bashing?" His fellow CBS newsman Dan Rather simply concluded, "It's hard to see how [Reno] could get criticized for the way the operation was carried out."

On *Evans, Novak, Hunt & Shields*, the *Wall Street Journal*'s Al Hunt insisted the issue was "whether you believe in law" and even cast doubt on the now-famous Associated Press photo of Elián in Donato Dalrymple's arms before a gun-pointing INS officer. When Rep. Lincoln Diaz-Balart began to mention the photo, Hunt interjected, "Did you see that?" and, "You were in the house when they pointed [the gun]?" And since he was not, in fact, there, Hunt dismissively stated, "It's your interpretation."

It's a lose-lose situation for the Cuban-Americans. The media have branded them fanatics. Janet Reno is praised for her heroism, Marisleysis is seen as a religious freak, and even the picture of Elián and Donato Dalrymple at gunpoint is viewed with suspicion. The New York *Daily News* had this advice for what they called "the Little Havana cadre": "Get over it. You lost." And when it comes to garnering sympathy from the media, they're right. Whatever happened to afflicting the comfortable and comforting the afflicted? ♦

The Return of the Useful Idiots

Apologies for communism are not just a historical curiosity. BY JOHN PODHORETZ

THE UNIVERSAL OUTRAGE on the right over the raid on Lázaro González's Miami house has reminded fratricidal conservatives of the glue that held them together before the collapse of the Soviet Union: anti-communism. The once close-knit strands of the conservative movement that have been threatening to unravel for the past nine years have been stitched together again, at least for the moment. Pat Buchanan and Charles Krauthammer, otherwise at war, are speaking with one voice in this case. "The real kidnapper of Elián González is Fidel Castro; Mr. Clinton and Janet Reno acted as his accomplices," Buchanan said. Krauthammer put it this way: "It was a disgrace. . . . [Janet Reno] will be remembered as the Attorney General . . . who gave us that awful picture of the boy and the gun."

These two and others are united not only in their anger at Clinton's action, but in their disgust at the return of the "useful idiots"—Lenin's term for credulous non-Communist denizens of the West who were easily suckered by the supposed democratic progressivism of the 1917 Revolution.

Now, the rhetoric spouted these past months by longtime Castro sympathizers like the Rev. Joan Brown Campbell of the National Council of Churches was to be expected. (Last year, in a Havana rally, Campbell begged the forgiveness of Cubans for this nation's hard line on trade with Cuba: "We ask you to forgive the suffering that has come to you by the actions of the United States. . . . It is on behalf of Jesus the liberator that we work against this embargo.") Campbell and her ilk are professional ideologues who have spoken passionately for decades about the virtues of Castroite Cuba, Sandinista-ruled Nicaragua, and other Soviet satellites.

No, the really appalling stuff has been written and spoken by the sorts of people who like to refer to themselves as "mainstream journalists." In newspaper after newspaper, magazine after magazine, and TV chat show after TV chat show, many of those who have been filing reports from Cuba have joined a special dishonor roll exemplified by the notorious *New York Times* dispatches of Walter Duranty, who praised the Soviet Union's forced collectivization policy in the late 1920s and early 1930s, even as millions were dying because of it.

One notorious anti-anti-Communist trope revived in recent weeks has been reflected in the oft-expressed notion that Elián González's life in Cuba would be superior to his continued residency in south Florida—that the socialist benefits provided by a Stalinist regime make it a better place for children. "In some ways, young Elián might expect a nurturing life in Cuba, sheltered from the crime and social breakdown that would be part of his upbringing in Miami," wrote Brook Larmer and John Leland in *Newsweek*. On *The McLaughlin Group*, Eleanor Clift said: "To be a poor child in Cuba may in many instances be better than being a poor child in Miami, and I'm not going to condemn their lifestyle." As if living under the Communist yoke were a "lifestyle choice."

These words could have come

Contributing editor John Podhoretz is a columnist for the New York Post.

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Peace with Syria

Should Israel surrender the Golan Heights?

Almost irresistible pressure is being exerted on Israel to surrender the Golan Heights to Syria, in order to achieve peace with that country. The pressure comes, of course, from the Arab countries, but regrettably also from the European nations and even the United States – Israel's best and most steadfast friend.

What are the facts?

Indispensable for Israel's defense. The Golan, a plateau approximately the size of the borough of Queens in New York, has, since biblical times, been a part of Palestine. It was (in a great-power play) ceded by Britain to the French mandate, following World War I. When the French in 1941 granted Syria independence, the Golan became part of that country. It is not, as the Syrians like to claim, "holy Arab territory", of which not an inch can ever be ceded.

Since the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, the Syrians shelled the settlements of northern Israel almost daily and made life there intolerable. In the War of 1967 (the "Six-Day War"), the Syrians treacherously attacked Israel through the Golan and almost succeeded in defeating it. It would have been the end of the Jewish state. Miraculously, Israel was able to repel the aggressors and to occupy the Golan Heights. The Golan has since then been integrated politically and in every other respect into the State of Israel. What used to be a wilderness has become, under Israeli administration, a successful province, with prospering cities and flourishing agriculture. But most important of all: The Golan is totally indispensable for the defense of Israel.

That makes it incomprehensible why our President, who, like the American people, is interested in the survival of Israel, presses that country to relinquish the Golan. Without the Golan, and with the Golan in the hands of those whose death wish for Israel has never been abandoned, Israel would be indefensible.

Never in the history of the world has a defeated aggressor successfully insisted that territories lost during its aggression be returned to it before being willing to make peace with the victor. Germany does not ask France to return Alsace-Lorraine, nor Poland to return the large chunks of eastern Germany that were allotted to it at the end of World War II. Why then the insistence that tiny Israel deprive itself of an area that is totally vital to its survival?

> "There is a way to make peace with Syria: Israel would return sovereignty of the Golan to Syria, but would lease the territory from it for an agreed-upon period. That is what the British did in Hong Kong and what we are doing in Guantanamo."

Unprecedented though it would be, an agreement with Syria about the Golan would be possible and acceptable to Israel if it would bring about *real* peace with Syria. But that is not in the cards. The hatred against Israel is so deep-seated that it would take progressive leaders and at least a generation or two to overcome it. Syrian newspapers and broadcasts are filled with venom and unending hatred against Israel. Schoolchildren, beginning with the earliest grades, are filled with poisonous invective against the "Nazi-Zionist entity". The official government line is that the Arabs (under Syrian leadership) must mass their resources to "liberate all occupied Arab land". And that, of course, is a code word for Israel. Israel must be eliminated.

Syrian "chutzpah". The gall, the "chutzpah" of the Syrians is almost beyond belief. Syria is a third-rate country, with a bankrupt economy, and – having lost the support of the Soviet Union – a second-rate military power. Still, in their dealings with Israel, they act as though they were victors and in a position of great strength. While Mr. Barak, the Prime Minister of Israel, appears to jump through hoops to "negotiate" with the Syrians, Syria's top man – the dictator, Hafez Assad – cannot be bothered to attend any meetings. He sends his number-two man, who is instructed not to shake hands with the hated Israelis and not to enter any discussions unless the Israelis agree beforehand to every demand the Syrians have to make. It is sad that the Israelis, being in a position of total strength, would consider such humiliating conditions.

In case any agreement on the governmental level were reached that Israel should return the Golan to Syria, such agreement would still be subject to a plebiscite of the Israeli electorate. Such approval should be by a super-majority – namely by a majority of all eligible voters, and not just by a majority of those voting. We in the United States are well acquainted with super-majorities for matters of great consequence, such as amending the Constitution. Could Israel be expected to divest itself of part of its country and of a vital strategic asset by just one vote?

There is a way to make peace with Syria: Israel would return sovereignty of the Golan to Syria, but would lease the territory from it for an agreed-upon period – 25 or 50 years. That is what the British did in Hong Kong and what we are doing in Guantanamo, Cuba. It seems to work out well, even for nations that (as between Cuba and us) are hostile to each other. During such time, one would hope that public opinion in Syria and in the other Arab countries had matured sufficiently for Israel to be able to afford relinquishing this strategic asset. For Syria to agree to such a settlement would be a positive step toward peace – proof of their good intentions. But, regrettably, the acceptance by Syria of such a solution is unlikely.

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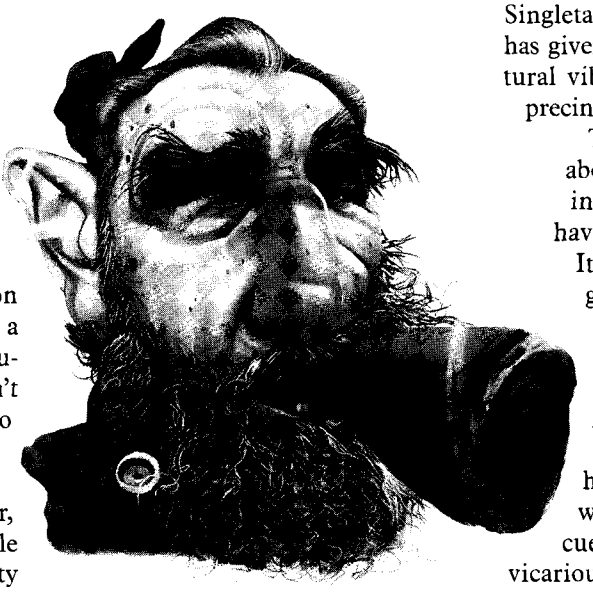
straight from the mouth of Juan Miguel González, Elián's father. In an interview with Dan Rather on *60 Minutes*, for which he was obviously well coached, Juan Miguel asked: "What's freedom?" Is it "for example, in Cuba, where education and health care is free. Or is it the way it is here? Which of the two is freedom? For example, here, when parents send their children to school, they have to worry about violence. A child could be shot at school. In Cuba, things like that don't happen."

The quality of Cuba's schools and the country's literacy programs have also been much discussed and compared favorably to what's available in the United States. On NPR's *Weekend Edition*, *St. Petersburg Times* editorial writer Diane Roberts spoke of a trip she took to London, where her British friends sought answers about the boorish American attitude toward the island nation: "They figure I understand how a nation fixated on family values could hesitate for a moment in restoring a grieving, traumatized child to his parent. I don't understand. I have never been to Cuba, though most of my British friends have. They come back exclaiming over the turquoise water, the opulent rum, the friendly people who manage to maintain their dignity despite dire poverty, poverty exacerbated by the American embargo."

Her British friends, Roberts assured her listeners, "also deplore Castro's jailing of dissidents, gays, and writers. They despise his refusal to hold elections. But most of my British friends have been to Florida, too. . . . They couldn't help noticing that the literacy rate is higher in Cuba than in Florida." Cuba claims a 96 percent literacy rate, but of course every single person there was born and raised speaking Spanish. Florida has hundreds of thousands of Spanish-speaking immigrants—many of them refugees from Cuba—who are understandably not entirely literate in English.

Writing in *Slate*, Columbia journalism school professor Charles Kaiser acknowledged that "the country is pitifully poor, the fancy new hotels and restaurants built for the tourist trade are off-limits to Cuban citizens, and food is far from plentiful. And yet, despite all the hardship and real political oppression, the people remain incredibly vibrant, the literacy rate is higher there than it is here, and there is an astonishing array of music, theatre, and dance available to everyone in Havana. The health care is better, too."

Would Kaiser, a gay activist, recommend to any HIV-positive friends that they journey to Cuba, home of that superior health-care system, for



their treatment? Does he not know that Castro has jailed homosexuals for "counterrevolutionary activities" since the revolution and quarantined AIDS victims in the 1980s?

Michelle Singletary, a financial columnist for the *Washington Post*, also visited Cuba and found the poverty kind of refreshing. "In Cuba there are no shelves full of Barbie dolls. There is no Disney World," she wrote approvingly. "Instead of aerodynamic skateboards or sparkling Rollerblades, many Cuban children are forced to fashion their own toys. I watched as three young boys darted around traffic on makeshift scooters made out of old crates. Just down the street, other boys were playing drums on empty cardboard boxes."

Randall Pinkston of CBS, reporting from Havana, also noted that "people appear untroubled by the lack of modern conveniences." How different that is from what Singletary finds here in the States: "So many of us in America live what Cubans would consider very prosperous lives. Yet we worry that we don't have enough while our homes are filled with gadgets and things paid for with money we don't have. We shower our children with so much stuff that there is always a perpetual layer of toys in their pricey toy bins that they never play with again."

Their very poverty, in the eyes of Singletary and Kaiser and Pinkston, has given Cubans a spiritual and cultural vibrancy lacking in the softer precincts of the United States.

There is something obscene about visitors to Cuba who revel in the privation that Cubans have not chosen for themselves. It may be true that hardship is good for the soul, but none of those singing its praises have taken their kids to Pennsylvania to bring them up as Mennonites.

In the view of those who have journeyed to Cuba in the wake of Elián González's rescue last year or have only paid vicarious imaginary visits to its shores (like Diane Roberts), it seems that Fidel's fiefdom may well be a civil society superior to the raucous streets of Miami—which is, recall, a place in which hundreds of thousands of people born in Cuba have demonstrated they can prosper and exercise democratic political power if they are given the right to do so.

It was precisely opinions like these—wide-eyed, credulous expressions of moral equivalence between a totalitarian tyranny and the taken-for-granted freedoms of the West—that helped solidify the anti-Communist alliance whenever differences on other matters threatened to tear it asunder. The return of the useful idiots has brought anti-communism back to life.

Our Cold War has begun anew. ♦

Illustration by Thomas Fluharty

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The Right's New Moral Equivalence

For some conservatives, confidence in America's superiority is flagging. BY TOD LINDBERG

FORMER PRO FOOTBALL wide receiver Steve Largent of Oklahoma is now one of the more prominent social conservatives in the House of Representatives. The Hall of Famer, father of four, and born-again Christian bears watching as a bellwether of opinion and sentiment in the rightward reaches of the Republican party and conservative America. So when Largent took to the op-ed page of the *New York Times* April 5 to argue for the immediate return of Elián González to his father in Cuba, it was hardly a typical case of a conservative politician finding a ready audience for a dissenting embrace of a position favored by liberals.

Largent's piece crystallized a strain of opinion that has been quietly emerging for some time now—one that helps explain the unwillingness of a Republican Congress to put up much of a fight against the Clinton administration's decision to cooperate with the Cuban government in reuniting Elián with his father. If it was once the habit of left-wing intellectuals to see themselves as fundamentally alienated from their country and their culture, a similar sense of alienation has now taken root in some provinces of the religious right.

"Politics is keeping Elián González from his father, and it's time he is returned," Largent wrote. "This is a family issue first and foremost. To forget that and allow our hatred for the Cuban regime to keep us from what is best for the child is shameful. It's already a tragedy that the child has lost his mother; it would be a shame for our government to come between him and his father. . . . I know how important daddies are to 6-year-old boys. The question then becomes: Is it better for Elián to live in our great country without his father or to live with his father in Cuba. No contest: I say reunite Elián with his daddy—today."

It's a mistake to see this sensibility, pro or con, through the same Cold War prism with which most of the debate over Elián has been refracted. The right has quite correctly taken aim at the collective amnesia of many Americans, 10 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, with regard to the special evils of Communist totalitarianism. There is something appalling about the indifference to the plight of ordinary people in the places where communism survives—cut off from its ideological ambition of global dominance, but no less cruelly effective as a means of repression. And as a matter of first impression, Largent's view looks like such an exercise in indifference. On the left, Americans have been invited to view the Elián case solely as a matter of reuniting a father and son, political conditions in Cuba being wholly irrelevant. To judge by opinion polls, Americans have mostly accepted the invitation, and in this light, Largent's view looks like a similarly apolitical expression of paternal concern.

But the sensibility in question—call it Largentism—is more radical than that. The congressman hasn't averted his eye from the Cuban government, let alone engaged in apologetics for it: "Let me say unequivocally that I am second to none in my dislike for Mr. Castro's totalitarian regime." Largentism is neither heedless nor apolitical; on the contrary, it has a political critique at its heart: "I came to Washington with the deep-seated belief that the family is sovereign. You can't be for family values and at the same time advocate that governments be allowed to come between a father and his child."

It is not such a leap from the view that the United States lacks legitimacy to the view that Cuba is no different in that regard. The right-wing moral equivalence here precisely mirrors the old left-wing view that the United States was no better than the Soviet Union.

"Governments" shouldn't come between—which is to say, the United States government any more than the Cuban government. "The family is sovereign"—which is to say, the fami-

Tod Lindberg is editor of Policy Review.

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ly has supreme temporal authority over its members, higher than the authority any government possesses, whether democratic or Communist.

An e-mail correspondent this week told me he was having special difficulty making the case to his conservative home-schooling friends that Elián should be allowed to live in freedom in the United States. That's because for many of these conservatives, Largentism is now orthodoxy. The decision to home-school, for some, is a matter of the quality of education available to their children. For others, though, it is a declaration of separation from a culture they find abhorrent. The rise of home-schooling over the past decade, in this sense, is a visible sign of a growing disaffection from this country's government.

This disaffection can run deep: As a result of some combination of former and ongoing perceived depredations, the United States itself has lost its political and moral legitimacy in the eyes of some significant number of right-leaning Americans. This government has no special claim on justice. Indeed, no government has such a claim. It is not such a leap from the view that the United States lacks legitimacy to the view that Cuba is no different in that regard. The right-wing moral equivalence here precisely mirrors the old left-wing view that the United States was no better than the Soviet Union.

Except that the right-wing version has a vision of redemption. It's to be found in the "sovereign" family and God. Hence, perhaps, the special passion of Largentism for the reuniting of father and son in the Elián case. For if a government can contrive to keep Elián apart from Juan Miguel, how safe are the children in their sovereign family redoubts anywhere in the United States?

Steve Largent himself is probably not as radical as the doctrine described here. He has lately lowered his profile on the subject of Elián, and he is, after all, a part of the government. But he has his finger on the pulse of something whose beat is growing stronger. ♦

Bloody Nonsense

The Elián case reveals liberals as biological determinists. BY DENNIS PRAGER

SINCE ELIÁN GONZÁLEZ was rescued on Thanksgiving Day 1999, most liberals and many conservatives have been certain about what to do with this boy whose mother died trying to bring him to America: Send him back to his father in Cuba.

For the record, I acknowledged from the outset that, all things being equal, a child who loses his mother should be with his father. But from the beginning, I also rejected the certitude of those demanding that Elián be sent back to Cuba. Did the mother's dying to bring Elián to freedom count for nothing? Were we really prepared to send a child to a parent in a totalitarian state before knowing what that parent really wanted? Without ever meeting the father on free soil, from where did the certainty derive that he was a fit father—after all, he hadn't been married to Elián's mother in Elián's lifetime, and the boy's custodial parent had been his mother. How could anyone be certain that the father did not want his son to escape Cuba? Finally, once the father did not come for his son for months, and Elián began bonding with relatives in Miami, especially with a surrogate mother, shipping this boy to his absentee father in a country he could never return from seemed less and less morally justified.

In light of all these questions, why did nearly all liberals advocate sending the child to a father about whom they knew nothing and to a place to which no child should have to be returned?

One reason was the post-1960s liberal hatred for anti-Communists. While few liberals actually praise communism, ever since the Vietnam War, liberals have fought anti-communism with much greater zeal than they have fought communism. There were two major cold wars. One was between the United States and the Soviet Union, and the other was between anti-Communists (mostly conservatives) and anti-anti-Communists (nearly all liberals). Liberal hatred of anti-Communists could be seen these past months in the liberal loathing of Cuban-Americans. Whereas liberals and Democrats usually worship the ground American minorities walk on, they have only contempt for Cuban-Americans—because of that community's anti-communism.

The other reason for liberals' passion in this matter is less obvious but no less deep. Contemporary liberalism tends to attach enormous importance to blood ties.

This is illustrated by the attitude of virtually every liberal organization toward adoption, an institution that is living proof that love and values are infinitely more important than blood. The feminist and pro-choice movements are generally hostile to adoption—they see it as undermining birth mothers' "natural" right to keep their children, and they fear that encouraging adoption discourages pregnant women from having abortions. And social workers and other "child protection" agents, nearly all of whom are liberal, do everything possible to discourage adoption.

Dennis Prager, a writer and theologian, has a nationally syndicated daily radio talk show based in Los Angeles. His essay "Blood Versus Love," in Think a Second Time *(HarperCollins), recounts how the Illinois Supreme Court took 4-year-old "Baby Richard" from his parents and gave him to a birth father he had never met.*

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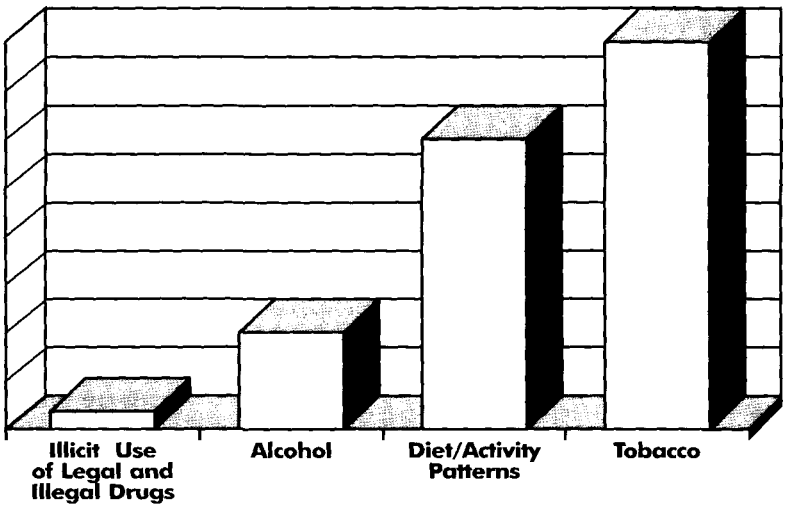
Let's Keep America's Drug Problem in Perspective

Estimated Causes of Preventable Deaths*



- 5 times as many people die from Alcohol each year than from illicit drugs and misuse of legal pharmaceuticals
- 15 times as many people die from poor diets and activity patterns
- 20 times as many people die from tobacco

Why arrest 1.6 million people each year for drugs?

Does jailing drug users make more sense than jailing over weight people and smokers?

* Estimated deaths attributed to: Illicit Use of Legal and Illegal Drugs - 20,000; Alcohol - 100,000; Diet/Activity Patterns - 300,000; Tobacco - 400,000.

Source: *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Statistics Source Book 1998 citing 1990 figures.* (Washington, DC: Department of Health and Human Services). Pg. 218

Common Sense for Drug Policy, Kevin B. Zeese, President
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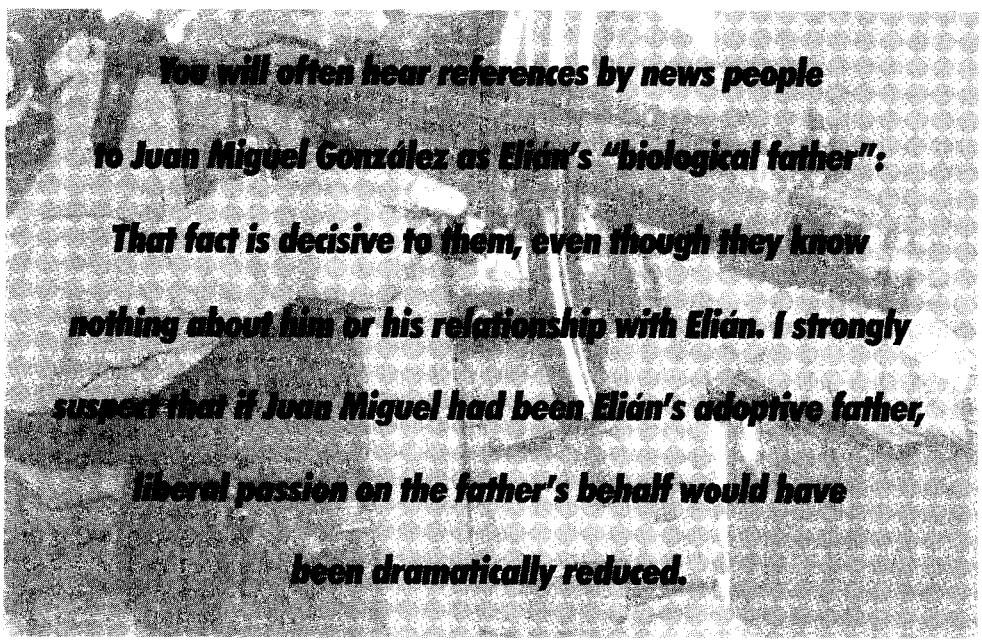
In December 1999, ABC television's John Stossel devoted his weekly special to the difficulties child welfare professionals place in the way of couples wishing to adopt children. The next day on my radio show he told me that his own producer had refused to produce that show. Why? "Because she is a liberal," a member of a group, Stossel explained, that values blood relations and therefore usually disdains adoption.

Compounding liberals' preoccupation with blood is their preoccupation with race. Liberalism holds a belief heretofore associated most visibly with Nazism—the identification of race with culture. Thus, it places enormous importance on biological "heritage," deeming it imperative, for example, that foreign-born adopted children be immersed in their racial/ethnic group's culture (though never their birth parents' religion).

Liberalism's commitment to blood ties is so deep that liberals in child welfare work have led the movement to return children to abusive biological parents and have so strongly opposed interracial adoption that it can fairly be said that many social workers actually prefer a child to have no parents than parents of a different race.

This is why you will so often hear references by news people to Juan Miguel González as Elián's "biological father": That fact is decisive to them, even though they know nothing about him or his relationship with Elián. Yet, I strongly suspect that if Juan Miguel had been Elián's adoptive father, liberal passion on the father's behalf would have been dramatically reduced.

Nevertheless, liberal opposition to anti-communism and love of blood cannot explain the 66 percent support by Americans for the Clinton administration's violent raid on the family that loved Elián. Clearly, a significant number of conservatives must also support this raid, and as their support cannot be attributed to pro-Castro or anti-anti-Communist sentiments, it is probably rooted in respect for blood ties.



Most conservatives pride themselves on holding "family values," and what could be more in keeping with that than returning a child to his father? Furthermore, many religious conservatives believe that blood ties have religious significance. Thus, despite the fact that conservatives, like liberals, know nothing about the father or his relationship with Elián, and despite all the facts they do know—for example, that returning Elián to Cuba after so long in America will doom him to psychological abuse by a Communist regime kicked out of the World Psychiatric Association for using psychiatric drugs on political dissidents—many conservatives assume the words "biological father" settle the issue.

So, once and for all, let us correctly define family values. They are the belief that the nuclear family is the linchpin of civilization, that every child has the right to have a father and a mother committed to each other in marriage.

Family values, therefore, do not embrace either single parenthood deliberately entered into (as opposed to resulting from abandonment, divorce, or death) or two "parents" of the same sex. Family values have nothing to do with blood: One's spouse and in-laws, for example, are full-fledged family. Any family-values advocate who would rather children be raised from birth by one biological parent than by a non-blood mother and father holds blood values, not family values.

As for religion and blood, I will speak only from my tradition, Judaism. To cite but three examples of Judaism's holding values to be more important than blood:

¶ The Talmud categorically states that "Whoever raises a child in his [her] house is considered *to have given birth* to the child" (italics added).

¶ Judaism holds that the mother of Moses, the greatest Jew who ever lived, was the woman who raised him, the non-Jewish daughter of Pharaoh (*Megillah* 13a).

¶ By Jewish law, a child must honor a person who teaches him moral and religious values above a parent who does not.

Distorting family values to mean blood values will serve only to ruin more children's lives. If conservatives do not understand this, America's future is as bleak as Elián González's probably is. ♦

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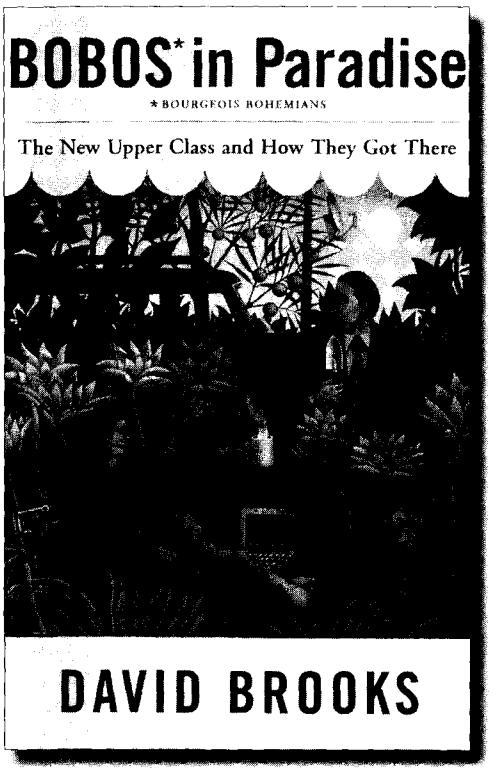
The New Upper Class

How conservatives won the culture war, and lost the peace.

By David Brooks

If you'd like to be tortured with dignity and humiliated with respect, you really ought to check out the Internet newsletter of the Arizona Power Exchange, an S&M group headquartered in Phoenix. The organization offers a full array of services to what is now genteelly known as the leather community. For example, on August 3, according to last summer's newsletter, there was a discussion and humiliation session. On August 6, at 7 P.M., there was a workshop on caning. The next night, the Bondage Sadomasochism Personal Growth and Support Group met with Master Lawrence, while on August 10, Carla helped lead a discussion on high-heel and foot worship. All of these meetings were to be conducted with the maturity embodied in the organization's mission statement: "Treating the S&M, B&D and D&S experience with acceptance, caring, dignity and respect." Dignity and respect are important when you're tied up on the ground worshipping someone's boot.



The organization, which goes by the acronym APEX, has a seven-member board of directors, a long list of officers and administrators, and a web page staff to design the Internet site, which is more demure than you'd expect from your average Rotary Club. APEX sponsors charity drives. There's a special support group for submissives who are too shy to vocalize the sort of submission they like. There's a seminar on S&M and the law. There are 12-step meetings for sadists and masochists recovering from substance abuse. Finally, there are outreach efforts to build coalitions with other bondage and domination groups nationwide.

When you read through the descriptions of the APEX workshops, you are struck by how much attention is devoted to the catering of these affairs. Topics like nude gagging are supposed to evoke images of debauched de Sades, but in this crowd paddling and punishment are made to sound more akin to wine tasting or bird watching. You imagine a group of off-duty high-school guidance counselors and other responsible flossers standing around in nothing but a leather girdle and their orthotics, discussing the merits and demerits of foreign versus domestic penile clamps. It's all so temperate and responsible. It's so bourgeois.

Sex, especially adventurous sex, used to be the great transgressive act. Dissolute aristocrats would gather their whips and manacles and repair to the palace attic to flout middle-class morality. Bohemians would throw off the fetters of respectability and explore the joys of Free Love. Radical sex was a direct assault on the supposedly puritanical strictures of mainstream society.

But today, that is obsolete. And it's not only organizations like APEX that try to gentrify norm-challenging

David Brooks is a senior editor of The Weekly Standard. *This article is adapted from his new bestselling book,* Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There *(Simon & Schuster).*

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eros and make it responsible and edifying. There is now a thriving industry that caters to people who want to practice bizarre but respectable sex. Henry Miller was once an affront to decency, but now there are shelves and shelves of Barnes & Noble erotica that owe more to the Iowa Writer's Workshop than to any Left Bank underground cell. There are high-minded sex journals that advertise in the back of tasteful magazines like *Harper's*. There are so many academic theoreticians writing about sexual transgressions that orgies must sometimes resemble Apache dances at tourist season, performed less for the joy of the thing than to please the squads of Culture Studies professors who have flown in to quote Derrida.

In short, over the past few years, Americans of the educated class have domesticated lust by enshrouding it in high-mindedness. They have taken perverted sex, which for centuries has been thought to be arousing or sinful or possibly dangerous, and they have attempted to make it socially constructive.

These upscale Americans turn out to be the Scout leaders of the pubic region. Nearly gone are all traces of 1960s Dionysian wantonness. Instead, "Play Safe" and "Play Responsibly" are the slogans repeated again and again in the sophisticated sex literature. The practitioners talk so much about how healthy sex is you'd think they were doing jumping jacks. To keep everything responsible and under control, weird activities are girded round with rules and etiquette. Judging by the sexual encounter groups that describe their activities in newsletters, the codes governing group-sex community meetings—prescribing when it is necessary to sign a legal waiver, when it is okay to smoke—are strictly adhered to. This may not be the etiquette that ruled behavior in 19th-century parlors, but in its relentless demand for self-control and responsibility, it's propriety nonetheless.

Today's Marquis de Sades don't hate society. They're not trying to subvert normality. They're trying to join it. They want to win mainstream acceptance and so gain a respectable place in the middle-class world. "We affirm that loving more than one can be a natural expression of health, express joy and intimacy. This is a lovestyle we call responsible non-monogamy," reads the mission statement of *Loving More* magazine, the journal of polyamory. These days, every "affirmation group" seeks its niche in the land of the up and up: the necrophiliacs, the lovers of orthodontia, the piercists, the crush lovers (people who enjoy watching women smash things), and the macrophiliacs (people who fantasize about women who destroy buildings with their breasts). Everyone wants to be seen as normal.

This is how the culture war ends. The institutions that once challenged the moral order don't disappear. In fact, they grow more popular. But their meanings change. They get digested by the mainstream bourgeois order, and all the cultural weapons that once were used to undermine middle-class morality, however disgusting, are drained of their subversive content. The formerly transgressive groups develop styles of conduct that mimic bourgeois stability. They adopt their own forms of respectability and responsibility. This happened to the Free Love movement of the 1960s. It's happened to the rock festivals. Once, Woodstock pretended to be the dawning of a new antinomian age, but now rock concerts are places lawyers take their kids. It's even happened to street demonstrations, as anyone who watched the recent anti-IMF protests in Washington can attest. All that was once menacing turns dull and ritualistic. Society absorbs the countercultural assault and finds a new equilibrium. And the only thing to do is to tote up who got the better of the exchange. Is the new social order more like the old one, or is it more like the new world the counterculturalists were hoping to create?

To answer that question, remember what the recently concluded culture war was all about. It really began in Paris in the first half of the 19th century. There, a group of artists and intellectuals looked at the merchant middle classes that had displaced the aristocracy as the leading force in society and decided they were revolting. Flaubert observed the "stupid grocers and their ilk" and found them "plodding and avaricious." Stendhal declared hatred of the bourgeoisie to be "the beginning of all virtue." The shopkeepers made him want to "weep and vomit at the same time." The poet and playwright Alfred de Musset hurled himself against the sacred institutions of the middle class: "Damned Be the Family and Society. Cursed Be the Home and Cursed Be the City. Damnation upon the Motherland."

The bourgeoisie loved stability and order, custom and ritual. So the rebel intellectuals went in for anarchic protests that were designed to shock the bourgeoisie. *Épater les bourgeois*! Bohemian men grew their hair long and wore beards. They adopted flamboyant modes of dress, worshipped "primitive" people supposedly untouched by boring commercial civilization. They went in for the macabre. They loved campy pranks. The poet Gérard de Nerval took a lobster on a leash through the Tuileries gardens. "It does not bark," he remarked, "and it knows the secrets of the deep." The more you read about the Parisian rebels, the more you realize they thought of everything.

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For the next 150 years, radicals, intellectuals, and hippies could do little but repeat their stunts and rebellions.

During that century and a half, the issue at the center of the conflict remained essentially the same: merchant-class morality. The bourgeois stood for a set of virtues the bohemian thought were tepid and soul-destroying: self-discipline, frugality, order, moderation, industry, temperance, fidelity, and faith. The bourgeois celebrated the entrepreneur, the family, organized religion. The bourgeois distrusted radical change and preferred comfort to passionate intensity.

The bohemian, on the other hand, championed a different set of virtues: creativity, hedonism, spontaneity, imagination, altered states of consciousness, uninhibited self-expression. The bourgeois floated on a swell of affluence, so the bohemian rejected materialism. The bourgeois admired politeness, so the counterculturalist was raw. The bourgeois was neat, so the bohemian was haphazard. The bourgeois was career-oriented, so the bohemian was experience-oriented. The bourgeois practiced conspicuous consumption, so the bohemian practiced conspicuous non-consumption. The bourgeois pretended to be chaste, so the bohemian pretended to be promiscuous. The realm of the bourgeoisie was the marketplace. The quintessential bohemian activity was art.

From the 1960s to the mid-1990s, it was easy to tell which side someone was on. Did he like guns or granola, feminism or Falwell?

This culture war simmered throughout the industrial era. One hundred years ago, if you read Horatio Alger stories you were bourgeois. If you hung around Greenwich Village talking revolution, you were bohemian. In the 1950s, if you liked Ike, you were probably bourgeois. If you read the Beats you were probably bohemian. But then in the 1960s, bohemia exploded into a mass movement, and the cultural conflict turned into a society-wide war. Theodore Roszak, the chronicler of the 1960s revolt, summarized the hippie critique of the middle classes in *The Making of the Counter Culture*: "The bourgeoisie is obsessed by greed; its sex life is insipid and prudish; its family patterns are debased; its slavish conformities of dress and grooming are degrading; its mercenary routinization of life is intolerable."

Through most of the prolonged conflict, the bourgeoisie ignored the countercultural attacks and followed the advice on its throw pillows: Living well is the best revenge. But in the 1960s, the countercultural assault could not be ignored. A group of conservative intellectuals and religious conservatives rose up to defend bourgeois morality. It may not be grand and inspiring, as religious or aristocratic morality can be, these conservatives conceded, but the bourgeois code provides an effective moral context for modern life. With its emphasis on self-discipline, thrift, neighborliness, and industry, it provides a check on the selfishness endemic to capitalism. With its reverence for institutions such as the family, the church, good manners, it makes life pleasant and decent. Moreover, the conservatives added, let's not underestimate the importance of material progress. The bourgeoisie's talent for wealth-creation has opened up opportunities for billions and spread the bounty more broadly than ever before.

Bohemians may aspire to grand spiritual transcendence, the conservatives continued, but they often end in self-indulgent nihilism. Their rebellion against authority leads not to blissful liberation, but to self-destructive behavior. The romantic searchers seek only to throw off conventional morality, but succeed in subverting all morality, all civil restraint. Pretty soon, fathers are abandoning their families and the sanctity of the two-parent family is gone. Children raised without clear moral guideposts slip into drug abuse and criminality. Popular culture becomes more vulgar and social pathologies skyrocket.

And so from the 1960s through the mid-1990s, the culture war raged, and it was pretty easy to tell which side a person was on, sometimes just by the way he dressed or talked. Did he like guns or granola, feminism or Falwell, buzzcuts or beads? Conservative defenders of bourgeois values loved the Reagan eighties and loathed the New Left sixties. The left-wing counterculturalists loathed the Decade of Greed and loved the Age of Aquarius.

Interestingly, through most of the culture war, conservatives felt they were losing. "Bohemian values have come to prevail over bourgeois virtue in sexual morals and family roles, arts and letters, bureaucracies and universities, popular culture and public life," George Gilder argued in 1995. "As a result culture and family life are widely in chaos, cities seethe with venereal plagues, schools and col-

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leges fall to obscurantism and propaganda, the courts are a carnival of pettifoggery." The following year, Robert Bork extended that argument in *Slouching Towards Gomorrah*, which shot up the bestseller lists.

But look around America today, and it is far from clear that they were right. If bohemian nihilism were really on the march, could America sustain an economy as productive as this one?

The first thing to notice is that the atmosphere of culture war has largely abated. Sure, there are still disputes about fundamental issues like abortion, guns, and affirmative action. Politics will never end. But as far as cultural politics is concerned, a relative calm has settled over the landscape. Most of the country recoils from any sort of cultural conflict. The public drew back from the Clinton impeachment because it didn't want to get involved in another passionate confrontation over morals (the stock market was doing too well). This year, two presidential candidates avoid the culture war rhetoric that was a staple of earlier campaigns. Al Gore mixes some social conservatism with his social liberalism, and George W. Bush is a nonideological sort who basically abstained from the fight over the Clinton scandals. The majority of Americans don't seem to want to make harsh moral judgments, either in defense of traditional values or against them.

Moreover, these days it is suddenly very difficult to tell the bohemian from the bourgeois. The old categories no longer make sense. Hip bankers are wearing those teeny tiny steel-framed glasses because now it is apparently more prestigious in corporate America to look like Franz Kafka than Johnny Carson. Upscale WASP suburbs are suddenly dotted with arty coffeehouses where people drink European coffees, read alternative weeklies, and listen to old protest rock.

Meanwhile, former bohemian neighborhoods are now dotted with multimillion-dollar lofts and upscale gardening stores where you can buy a faux-authentic trowel for $35.99. Former countercultural enclaves like Berkeley, California, and Burlington, Vermont, have become fantastic business centers, and the airwaves are filled with commercials for huge corporations that cite bohemian icons like Jack Kerouac and Ghandi. The people who grew up arguing that consumerism is a sham now renovate kitchens so big they look like aircraft hangars with plumbing, complete with 48-inch-wide, six-burner, dual-fuel, 20,000 BTU Viking ranges that send up heat like a space-shuttle rocket turned upside down.

Further, if you investigate people's attitudes toward sex, morality, leisure time, and work, it's harder and harder to separate the bourgeois company man from the bohemian rebel. Most people, at least among the college-educated set, hold rebel attitudes and bourgeois success-oriented attitudes all scrambled together. Marx taught that classes always conflict, but sometimes they just blur. Defying expectations and maybe logic, people seem to have merged the two culture-war rivals—the bohemian sixties and the bourgeois eighties—into one social ethos.

In fact, this phenomenon is a consequence of the information age. In this era, ideas and knowledge are at least as vital to economic success as capital. So the people who thrive are the ones who can turn ideas and emotions into products. These are university-oriented folk who have one foot in the bohemian world of creativity and art and the other foot in the bourgeois realm of the marketplace. The members of the information age elite are bourgeois bohemians, or bobos. And when you look at them in their university towns, in their upscale suburbs, in their Rocky Mountain retreats, you can't help asking yourself: When the bourgeois merged with the bohemian, who sold out to whom?

You can drive yourself crazy trying to get to the bottom of that one, because the bobo synthesis draws heavily on both the bourgeois value system and the bohemian value system. But ultimately, it was the bohemians who made the crucial concession. There is a loser: The bohemians lost the culture war, and the bourgeoisie won. Because at its root, the culture war was about commercial civilization. The bourgeoisie were merchants. The core of the bohemian complaint was that commercial culture is inherently corrupting. But now the bohemians have decided that commercial culture is wonderful, so long as they can wear jeans and black T-shirts to work.

The counterculturalists have invaded the business world and brought their countercultural frameworks with them. More precisely, they have brought those aspects of the counterculture that enhance profits and discarded those that don't. In fact, the one place where the lingo of the Age of Aquarius is still bellowed out full force is the corporate boardroom. "Sometimes You Gotta Break the Rules," Burger King advertises. "Born to be Wild," is Lucent Technology's motto. "Think revolution, not evolution," advises a senior vice president at Home Depot. "Destruction is Cool!" raves leading management consultant Tom Peters. Nowadays the lords of corporate America talk like stoned teenagers. Next year's cost projections? They're insanely great! The product pipeline? Way cool! How'd the IPO go? It cratered! And this is not just rhetoric. In the 1960s, the radicals complained about tech-

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nocracy and bureaucratic stultification. They wanted personal, face-to-face relationships. And today's corporations have reengineered themselves exactly along these lines. To understand the values that guide the prevailing management philosophy, read Roszak. And as the strength of the economy proves, these formerly radical ideas, rightly applied, have produced wonderful results. Companies are more creative. Workers who consider themselves artists instead of drones work evenings and weekends.

So the radicals have transformed even corporate America. But they themselves have also been transformed. They have embraced worldly ambition. They accept and even lionize the judgments of the marketplace. They celebrate work, profit, and capital gains. There has never been a time in American history when business people had such prestige, when so few Americans saw themselves as mortal enemies of capitalism. Magazines like *Wired*, *Fast Company*, and *Red Herring* may have countercultural trappings, but ultimately they are business magazines. They celebrate the business person's virtues, and these virtues now set the tone for American life.

Magazines like Wired, Fast Company, *and* Red Herring *may have countercultural trappings, but ultimately they are about business.*

The bourgeoisie was always competitive at work, but sentimental and stability-loving at home. So radicals and proto-radicals have always argued that bourgeois America is too orderly, complacent, conformist. "We hope for non-conformists among you, for your sake, for the sake of the nation, for the sake of humanity," the theologian Paul Tillich preached to a college audience in 1957.

But now, even intellectuals no longer call for liberating disorder. Instead, social critics these days tend to want *more* stability, *more* civil society, *more* social cohesion. The movements that now win the enthusiastic endorsement of polite opinion almost all have something to do with the reassertion of community authority. Universities are reinventing *in loco parentis*—reimposing curfews, rules on cohabitation, drinking, unsupervised parties, fraternity hazing, and sexual conduct. In legislatures across the country, there have been efforts to control Internet smut, guns, tobacco, violent television, campaign spending, video games. America has seen a historic wave of welfare reform in which state and federal agencies have imposed more rules and restrictions on welfare recipients. Cities across the nation have reimposed controls on panhandling, vagrancy, public drinking, even littering.

Back in the 1960s a man named A.S. Neill ran a school in Britain called Summerhill, which had virtually no rules except those set by the students themselves. Neill's book on his Summerhill method sold well over 2 million copies in the United States, part of a broad movement to give children maximum freedom to explore, create, and otherwise develop "naturally." No idea could be as out of fashion as that one is today. Now children are monitored, supervised, and enveloped in rules. The concern with children's safety is unprecedented. After the shootings at Columbine, one response drew unanimous agreement: Parents need to exercise more authority over their kids. The days of Rousseauian liberation are over.

Equally striking are the efforts, especially in upscale towns, to gain control over "sprawl." In every affluent neighborhood, a powerful group of citizens is promoting stricter and stricter zoning requirements, opposing new development, and fighting "improvements." Rather than being progressive and forward-looking, upscale neighborhoods are likely to look back, seeking to preserve the orderly past. Upscalers spend more time restoring lost treasures, renovating old buildings, browsing for creaky Moroccan crafts, or reading about Tuscan peasants than they do creating futuristic ways of living. Every third automobile in the former bohemian enclaves seems to have a bumper sticker that implores, "Save the _____," in aid of an old theater or an old boat or an old bay.

Politically, today's Americans show little desire to launch massive enterprises. They are generally disenchanted with those zealous for radical change, whether it be Hillary Clinton with her ambitious health care plan or Newt Gingrich with his ambitious effort to scale back government. Many thought that when the baby boomer university grads reached the top of the power pyramid, they would bring their youthful ideological style with them, but just the opposite has come to pass. Ideologies of right and left are out of favor, and utopianism is practically extinct. Americans are more likely to see politics as a series of humble improvisations enacted with cautious

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hopes and some anxiety. That is to say, America is today a conservative place. Conservative in the old-fashioned sense, meaning distrustful of rapid change, modest about what we can know and how effectively we can plan. That's the way the bourgeoisie likes it. And sometimes it is the former radicals in clogs and ponytails who fight futuristic change most fiercely (just try building a big new project in Burlington or Berkeley).

If you'd been one of those radical bohemians (whether from the 1830s or the 1960s) sitting in your garret dreaming of revolution, you would loathe America at the start of the 21st century. On the other hand, if you'd been a Babbitt, one of the shopkeepers the radicals used to ridicule, you'd be pretty comfortable, all things considered. You'd like living in a country where business is celebrated, but where civic life is moderate and cautious. It might take a while to get used to all the executives who dress like aging rock stars, and you'd be shocked by what passes for popular culture, but you'd grow to appreciate a world that offered such a wonderful selection of whole-grain pastas, a spinoff of all those organic grocery stores that emerged from the Bay Area after the 1960s.

Since the Babbitts mostly won the culture war, you'd think conservatives would be riding high. After all, conservatives were staunch defenders of middle-class morality and middle America. But over the past three or four years it has become increasingly clear that conservatism is not the political wing of the bourgeoisie. Conservatives were allied with the bourgeoisie as long as they had a common foe in the counterculture. But with that common foe now defunct, there are more and more ruptures between conservatives and middle America.

Conservatives were outraged by Bill Clinton. Middle America, by and large, didn't want to rock the boat while the economy was doing so well. Conservatives were excited by Newt Gingrich's efforts to radically scale back government. Middle Americans were put off by his vehemence. Conservatives passionately oppose abortion. Middle America is ambivalent. Conservatives oppose normalizing homosexuality. Middle America doesn't want to talk about it. The basic difference is that conservatives are motivated by ideals. Libertarians dream of a land of perfect freedom. Religious conservatives are motivated by their conception of the divine moral order. Some patriotically oriented conservatives are driven by their love of the democratic promise of America. But the bourgeoisie never goes in for grand and lofty politics. All it wants is a stable, moderate world in which to go about its commercial and domestic business.

And so the people on the right are beginning to launch the same sorts of attacks on the merchant middle class that countercultural lefties used to employ: The middle class is too deeply sunk in contentment. It is complacent. During the impeachment crisis, William Bennett wrote a book called *The Death of Outrage*. That's the problem with the bourgeoisie. It almost never gets outraged. It is not aroused by transcendent wrongs. It just sticks to its mundane affairs.

Ironically, it is the Democratic party that has best adapted to the post-culture war world. Once Democrats learned to submerge their countercultural impulses (after three consecutive presidential defeats), they adopted a political style that was, at least on the surface, anti-ideological, the way the good burghers—or, as we now call them, Soccer Moms—like it. The Clinton State of the Union addresses were a hodgepodge of modest reforms, each one designed to offer a concrete benefit to a discrete constituency; they didn't pretend to offer much in the way of ideological vision. To organize their thinking, the Clintonites chose three key words—"Opportunity, Responsibility, and Community"—as their perpetual campaign themes, rarely pausing over any tensions between those values. They embraced school uniforms and other conservative-sounding gestures, and also condoms in schools and other liberal-sounding gestures. Clinton triangulated above the culture warriors of left and right and concocted a mushy Third Way, which blends some impulses of the old bohemian counterculture and some impulses of the silent majority into a non-threatening pudding. It is a perpetual balancing act. But it is the political model that prevails across the industrialized world.

This mushy centrism drives many on the right—who long for a more heroic political style—batty. The centrist establishment stifles radical ideas and remains somehow immune to attack. There seems to be no there there. The new elite presents no coherent front. Instead, it coopts and embraces. Its leaders adopt your rhetoric and your suggestions while sucking out of them all of the radicalism and much of the substance. Third Way leaders never rise up for a fight. They just go along their merry way, blurring, reconciling, merging, and being happy.

After years of conflict and turmoil, a new order has solidified, with its own status rules, manners and mores, and ethical principles. A new Bobo Establishment has finally replaced the old Protestant Establishment that was killed off by the counterculture. Like it or not, the bobos have arrived, and they'll be setting the tone for our national life for some time to come. ♦

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Censoring Dr. Laura

Hollywood believes in free speech, until a social conservative gets a TV show.

By Jay Nordlinger

The gay lobby is seeking a trophy, and the target is Dr. Laura Schlessinger. "Dr. Laura," as she is known, is a radio therapist, dispensing advice to 18 million listeners. For sheer radio popularity, she has only one rival—Rush Limbaugh. An Orthodox Jew, Dr. Laura takes a traditional view of things, including homosexuality. For her troubles, gay groups have made her their Public Enemy Number One. They are campaigning tirelessly to get her off the radio and keep her off television. Conservative groups, more feebly, have risen to her defense. There is no fiercer battle in the culture war today.

Dr. Laura does not consider herself a gay-hater. She reminds people that she was one of the first radio hosts to take calls from open gays, about gay problems. She stresses compassion toward gays. But she is uncompromising in her opposition to homosexuality and the idea of gay rights. She has called homosexuality "a terrible sadness," "deviant sexual behavior," and, most controversially, "a biological error." She is a firm defender of the traditional family and inveighs freely against the gay political agenda: marriage, adoption, and so on. Worst of all from a gay-activist perspective, she has supported "reparative therapy," the treatment that seeks to help homosexuals change their sexual ways. She likes to say that radical, politicized gays always try to bully and silence other gays—the ones from whom she enjoys great and grateful support.

The campaign against Dr. Laura began in May 1999, when Paramount inked her to do a syndicated television show, to begin airing in September 2000. A prominent gay group, the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, or GLAAD, raised an alarm. In search of a mutual understanding, Dr. Laura invited the group's leader, Joan Garry, to have an on-the-record conversation with her. They did. The transcript was published in Dr. Laura's newsletter, with Garry having editorial control. The header read, "Their views on homosexuality are diametrically opposed, yet Dr. Laura and Joan Garry prove that philosophical differences can co-exist with mutual respect." This cordiality soon died. A spokesman for Dr. Laura guesses that Garry came under increasing pressure from the militants around her. They were in a mood for war, not dialogue. So, for GLAAD, Dr. Laura became the Great Satan, or at least, as Garry said, the present-day Anita Bryant. In August, GLAAD asked for a meeting with Paramount and vented its concerns.

In January, Brian Lowry of the *Los Angeles Times* published a column reporting the anger of gay employees at Paramount over their company's signing of Dr. Laura. David Lee, creator and producer of the popular sitcom *Frasier*, said, "I think it's outrageous that Paramount chooses to be in business with a woman who is, I think, literally dangerous to the gay community." The campaign heated up. Demonization set in. On February 14, GLAAD was granted another meeting with Paramount. Campaigning for president, Bill Bradley endorsed the move to bar Dr. Laura from the airwaves. A few days later, a member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors introduced a resolution tarring Dr. Laura as an inciter of "violence and hate."

Then, on March 10, there seemed to be an entente of sorts. Dr. Laura issued what GLAAD calls an apology and what she calls something less. She said, "I never intended to hurt anyone or contribute in any way to an atmosphere of hate or intolerance. Regrettably, some of the words I've used have hurt some people, and I am sorry for that. . . . I regularly remind my listeners that we are all made in G-d's image and, therefore, we should treat one another with love and kindness . . ." Paramount, for its part, seemed relieved. It pledged that Dr. Laura's TV show would include "multiple points of view, derived from a variety of sources." It went on to say, "We have a long history of support for the civil and human rights of all people. We have been equally strong in our support and respect for the free exchange of speech and ideas." All very neat and American.

Jay Nordlinger is managing editor of National Review.

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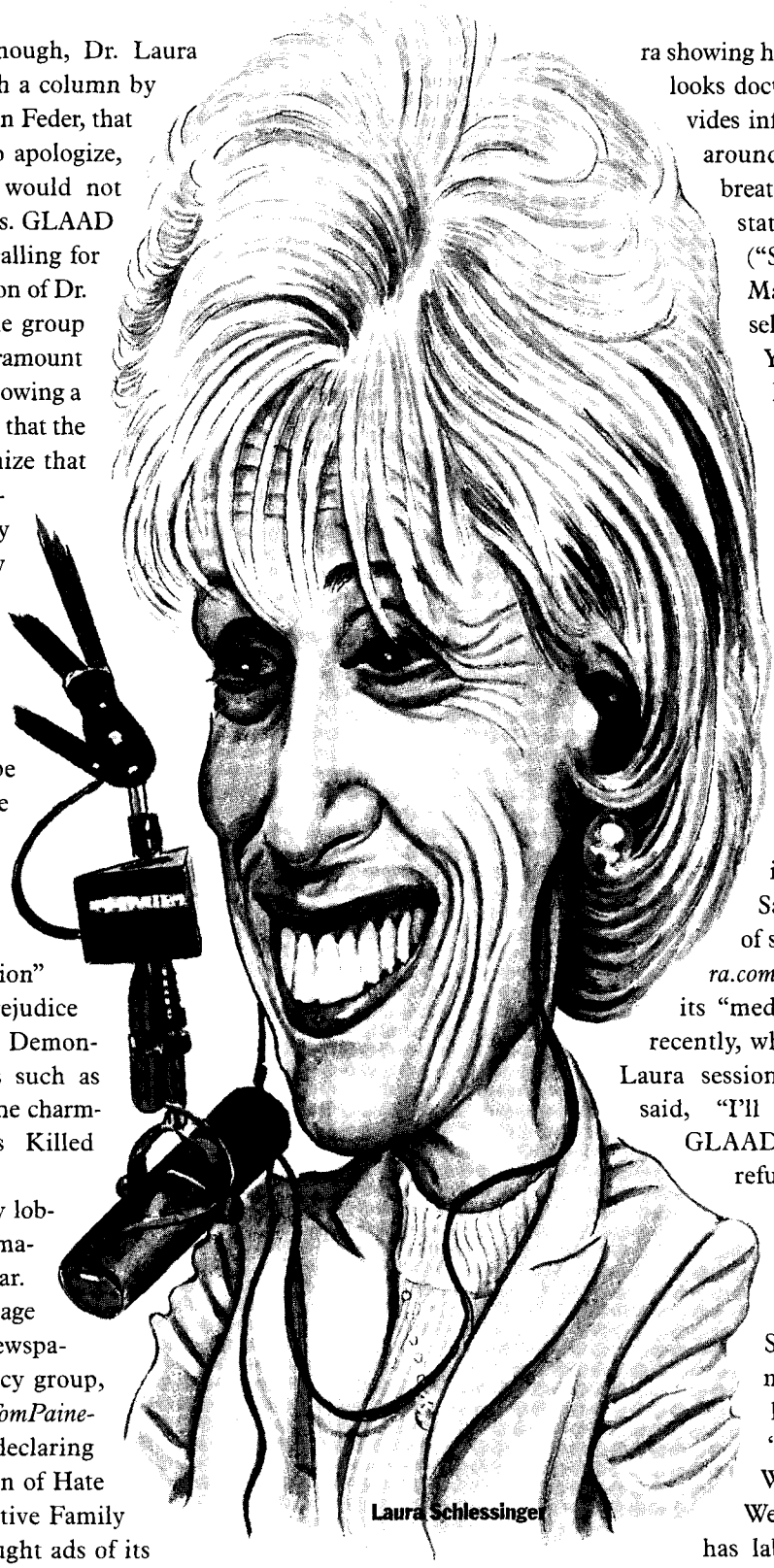
Five days later, though, Dr. Laura made it clear, through a column by the *Boston Herald*'s Don Feder, that she had not meant to apologize, only to clarify. She would not recant any of her views. GLAAD then hit the ceiling, calling for the outright cancellation of Dr. Laura's TV show. The group held a rally outside Paramount on March 21. Garry, showing a talent for rhetoric, said that the studio had "to recognize that they didn't buy controversy when they bought this show, they bought trouble." Dr. Laura, she said, "is a loose cannon, and everyone knows it—gay and straight." And "if she can't be controlled, she must be stopped." This was not "censorship," she insisted—only an attempt to squelch "defamatory expression" that "encourages prejudice and discrimination." Demonstrators carried signs such as "Stop Dr. Hate" and the charmingly subtle "Bigots Killed Christ."

From there, the gay lobby shifted into permanent Get Laura gear. GLAAD bought full-page ads in important newspapers. Another advocacy group, the left-wing outfit *TomPaine.com*, published ads declaring Dr. Laura "The Queen of Hate Radio." The conservative Family Research Council bought ads of its own: "The Thought Police Are Out to Silence Dr. Laura." Dr. Laura remarked that GLAAD's tactics reminded her of "Stalinist Russia." Anti-Laura websites proliferated, notably *StopDrLaura.com*, the command center of the campaign. The site features a picture of Dr. Laura showing her in a diabolical light. It looks doctored. The site also provides information about protests around the country, runs breathless bulletins about the state of the campaign ("S[an] F[rancisco] Station May Drop Laura!"), and sells T-shirts reading, "Are You a Biological Error?"



Laura Schlessinger

Drew Friedman

Presumably, GLAAD's fund-raising has gone through the roof; a group spokesman is coy on the subject. But, as Dr. Laura's rep points out, GLAAD and its allies can ill afford to let up on Dr. Laura. She is their cause, their rallying point, their cash cow.

The "entertainment community," too, is in on the act. Susan Sarandon posts messages of solidarity on *StopDrLaura.com*. GLAAD held one of its "media awards" ceremonies recently, which doubled as a hate-Laura session. Julia Louis-Dreyfus said, "I'll never forgive her." GLAAD boasted that it had refused any Paramount funding for the event (although it saw fit to take money from Philip Morris). Liz Smith, the gossip columnist, has expressed the hope that Dr. Laura will "dissolve like the Wicked Witch of the West." Ellen DeGeneres has labeled Dr. Laura "very dangerous." Another noted gay performer, however, has shown a bit of American spirit. Said Melissa Etheridge, "Dr. Laura has her own opinion. If people want to listen to it, it's fine. I don't believe in shutting anybody up."

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Given the immense pressure on her, Dr. Laura has buckled little. She continues to defend reparative therapy, saying that to deny it to those who crave it is "unbelievably cruel." She will not accept the swastika that her enemies try to stitch on her: "I am a member of a group that has been persecuted for millennia. To suggest that, because I do not support hate-crimes legislation for any group, I am indifferent to the suffering of others is reprehensible." Still, some of Dr. Laura's allies fear that, as the campaign wears on, Dr. Laura will have to pull her punches. Dr. Laura declined to be interviewed for this story, saying through a spokesman that she wanted to "lie low" for a while. Her harassers, though, take no break.

Because of death threats, Dr. Laura has had to cancel a number of engagements, including her annual birthday fund-raiser, which was to be held on April 15 in Michigan. The event would have raised $100,000 for her foundation, which benefits disabled and abused children. Asked to comment on the death threats and forced cancellations, GLAAD's spokesman, Stephen Spurgeon, scoffs. "She always makes claims about death threats," he says, "and that's a powerful thing to say, but I don't see her correspondence."

Dr. Laura's TV show is still slated to debut in September. In light of her broad national following, it should be a success. (In addition to her radio work, Dr. Laura is the author of four bestsellers. Her new book has a typically tart Schlessingerian title: *Parenthood by Proxy: Don't Have Them If You Won't Raise Them.*) But the activists continue to hope. John Aravosis, the power behind *StopDrLaura.com*, has said, "The show's going to be canceled. This is going to be living hell for Paramount for the next year at least." Dr. Laura has special scorn for those who believe as she does but will not stand up to the gay lobby. She knows that her fellow conservatives are afraid to touch these issues—doing so brings nothing but grief. She has said, somewhat dramatically, that the gay lobby is trying to "stifle the lone voice out there standing up for Judeo-Christian principles." She has a point. Laura Schlessinger is, in effect, a lone voice, particularly in Hollywood. Which is probably why her enemies are working so hard to snuff that voice out. ♦

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"Wilhelm And His Peststoppo"

"Heavens but it's hot down here," complained Heinrich to Joseph.

"You got it wrong," replied Joseph. "It's hell down here not heaven, don't you know."

"Right again, Joseph," Heinrich replied. "Sorry, not even any air conditioning here in Hades, is there?"

Then Heinrich told Joseph why he'd said heaven even if both of them were in hell. "Someone sneaked a newspaper from up there," he pointed. "It got down here. Look at this feature article on the front page," Heinrich invited Joseph.

"I see! I see!," exclaimed Joseph. "It's all about Wilhelm Clinton and his Fraulein Reno and the poor Cuban kid, Elian. Half of all the Yankee swinehund are for giving the kid back to his Father and Fidel. The other half want the kid to stay in the U.S.A."

"You got it right," Joseph complimented Heinrich. "But what else?"

"Well, mein Got, don't you see, Heinrich. Wilhelm learned from us."

"How?"

Joseph continued, "Isn't it just like the old days? I mean Wilhelm gets Fraulein Reno to send in their Peststoppo–what we called the Gestapo."

"I get it! I get it," exalted Heinrich. "Look at the guy wearing a mask with a machine gun busting into the family home to grab the kid. It's just like what we used to do in the good old days."

"Just think of it," Joseph happily cried out. "History repeats itself even for the Yankees. Strong arm stuff. The Gestapo rides again. Hurray for us! Long live the Yanks Pestoppo!"

"Yah, Heinrich. It's not so much what Wilhelm did. It's the way he did it. Three cheers for Wilhelm!"

"Das is gute," Joseph cried out.

With a click of their heels, the two heels heiled one another. They went on their separate ways.

For an instant both felt a flickering wisp of cold air away down deep in hell. Wilhelm, Fraulein Reno, and their Peststoppo had made their day.

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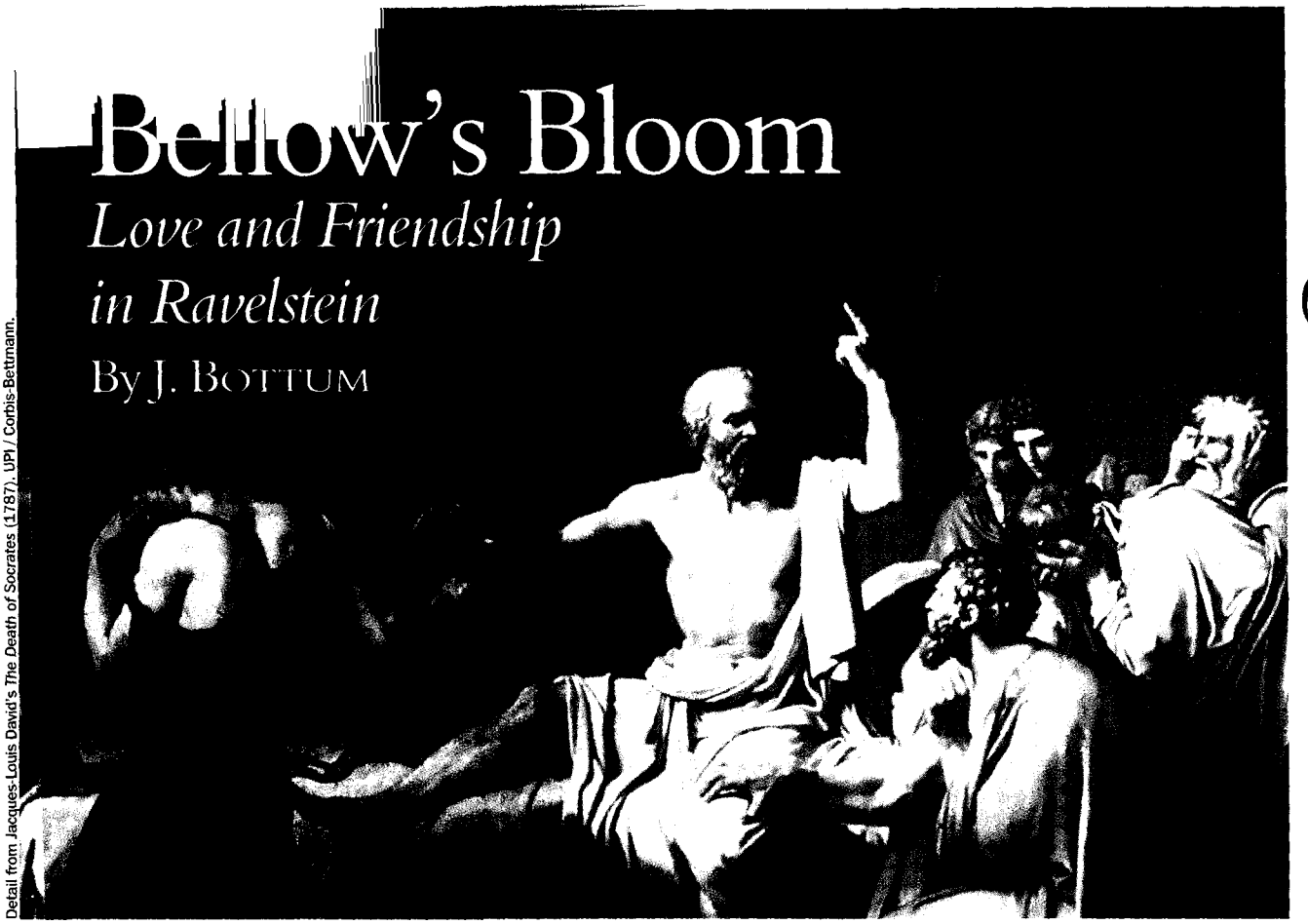
Bellow's Bloom

Love and Friendship in Ravelstein

By J. Bottum



Detail from Jacques-Louis David's *The Death of Socrates* (1787). UPI / Corbis-Bettmann.

At age eighty-four, matched with a young wife and a newborn child, Saul Bellow has gathered his energies and delivered another novel, his first full-length work in fourteen years.

Perhaps America's best living writer—our Nobel prizewinner, our one great novelist capable of real humor—Bellow is the chronicler of a certain kind of Jewish life that has almost disappeared in America, a midwestern life that has weakened, an urban life that has decayed, and a life of the mind that has nearly closed. He is our last survivor, and in *Ravelstein* he has written a book about surviving: surviving the death of his brothers and friends, surviving his own near-fatal illness, surviving the dying away of the worlds in which he set *The Adventures of Augie March*, *Herzog*, *Seize the Day*, *Humboldt's Gift*—the whole group of novels that made him famous.

Mostly, though, *Ravelstein* is about surviving the 1992 death of Allan Bloom, the master teacher at the University of Chicago and author of that conservative publishing phenomenon of the 1980s, *The Closing of the American Mind*. Lightly fictionalizing his friend as "Abe Ravelstein," Saul Bellow attempts in his book to ensure, through elegy, the survival of Allan Bloom in all his extravagant thinking, extravagant talking, and extravagant living: "You don't easily give up," the last line runs, "a creature like Ravelstein to death."

Ravelstein
by Saul Bellow
Viking, 233 pp., $24.95

Ravelstein consists of four movements. The opening chapter paints a textured, comic, and yet moving portrait of a visit to Paris by Ravelstein, a larger-than-life college professor whose lavish, spendthrift ways have recently been matched with funds thanks to his unlikely success with a book whose working title was (as *The Closing of the American Mind*'s was) "Souls Without Longing." Accompanying him as they shop and dine and listen to Ravelstein's endless combination of philosophical discourse, vaudeville routines, and gossip, are Chick, an elderly writer who is Ravelstein's close friend, Chick's young wife Rosamund, and Ravelstein's homosexual lover, Nikki.

The second movement is an account of Ravelstein's dying from AIDS in a Chicago hospital, mixed with pictures of his visiting friends and the narrating Chick's memories of earlier times, particularly the breakup of his marriage to a physicist named Vera and his taking of a new wife in Rosamund, who had been one of Ravelstein's students.

After Ravelstein's death, the novel turns to Chick's dangerous infection—drawn from Bellow's own experience—with a tropical fever from eating bad fish on a vacation in the Caribbean, his own close call with death, his recovery, and his decision to fulfill, at last, his promise to write a memoir of his dead friend. And in the last movement, the book returns to Chick's portrait of Ravelstein—which is to say, Saul Bellow's portrait of Allan Bloom.

To some degree, Bellow has been here before. Novelists are often capable of enormous cruelty, for painful family stories and the desperate emotions that swirl around friends' crises are at last too valuable not to be cashed

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in as fiction. Bellow famously used his acquaintances as fodder when he rendered the poet Delmore Schwartz as the sad failure Von Humboldt Fleisher in the 1975 *Humboldt's Gift* and the art critic Harold Rosenberg as Victor Wulpy in the 1984 story "What Kind of Day Did You Have?"

And, to some degree, it doesn't matter. No novel stands or falls entirely on the accuracy, or the morality, with which it portrays the originals of its characters. Thomas Mann's greatest weakness as a writer was his difficulty in finding plots, and he ruthlessly seized upon private events, deeply hurting his children, his brother, and his wife's family. Mann's late *Dr. Faustus* wounded fellow German refugees such as the composer Arnold Schoenberg by annexing them, but it remains nonetheless a monumental work—perhaps the only great novel ever written by an old, old man—and the controversy over its origins has long since faded from view.

But the case of *Ravelstein* appears different, somehow, for Allan Bloom is less the model than the reason for Saul Bellow's book. Through reports from Bellow's friends and interviewers, everyone has seemed to know for years that the novelist was thinking about a book based on Bloom. The prepublication notices of *Ravelstein* in *Publisher's Weekly* and *Kirkus Reviews* mentioned Bloom prominently, as a signal to reviewers across the nation that the topic of conversation about the book would be its portrayal of Bellow's friend.

Indeed, the author cannot quite claim the traditional immunity of novelists, for Bellow is a major source of our knowledge that Allan Bloom is Abe Ravelstein—and the real-life critic Edward Shils is Rakhmiel Kogon (described as a professor who makes a homosexual pass at a student while drunk), the political theorist Leo Strauss is Felix Davarr, the philosophical historian Werner Dannhauser is Morris Herbst, and so on, and so on, deeper and deeper into the overlapping worlds of the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago, the followers of Straussian political philosophy, and the heavyweights of conservative academia. In all the work he's done to promote the book—the early review materials given to *Esquire*, the publication of the first chapter's brilliant word portrait in the *New Yorker*, a pair of extraordinary interviews in the *New York Times*, the notices (with the author posing for pictures with his wife and child) in *Newsweek* and *Time*—Bellow himself has kept the Bloom connection in the air.

Saul Bellow in 1965

UPI / Corbis-Bettmann

The picture of Bloom given in *Ravelstein*, particularly the assertion of his open homosexuality and his death from AIDS, has caused some debate, though, in truth, there has been much more declaration that *Ravelstein* will provoke controversy than there has been actual controversy. Taking Bloom and Ravelstein as identical (and, what every other early reviewer refrained from, repeatedly naming one of Bloom's friends as the original for Ravelstein's homosexual lover Nikki), Andrew Sullivan in the *New Republic* denounced those who see in the combination of homosexuality and conservative thought "either hypocrisy or shame"—though, in fact, he could find no published example to quote. The *New York Times* mentioned "critics who have assailed Mr. Bellow for 'outing' the late Bloom and suggesting that he died of AIDS," though it could cite no particular critics' reviews.

Bellow himself has now backed away from the claim of AIDS: "For a long time, I thought I knew what Allan died of, and then I discovered other things that didn't jibe with that, so I really can't say now," he recently told an interviewer. But the descriptions of homosexuality in *Ravelstein* are not unimportant, for they raise questions about what constitutes serious conservative thought, what relation that thought ought to bear to the behavior of those who hold it, and what creates the rare Eros—the drive, the love, the urgent passion—that makes a great teacher.

Unfortunately, those are not the questions actually taken up in *Ravelstein*. The reason so many reviewers have written as though the potential controversy about Allan Bloom might be more interesting than the book about Abe Ravelstein is that the controversy *is* more interesting. There's much to commend in *Ravelstein*. It has bursts of such comic prose as "He came out of intensive care unable to walk. But he quickly recovered partial use of his hands. He had to have hands because he had to smoke." It has an opening chapter with such sharp observation as "In the matter of language the Brits had it all over us. Especially when their strength began to bleed away and language became one of their important resources." And it has a concluding page and a half of perfectly judged sentimentality, narrated in a sudden shift to a continuous present tense that makes its subject seem entirely alive: "He winds up his tie lifting the collar that crackles with starch. He makes a luxurious knot. The unsteady fingers, long, ill-coordinated, nervous to the point of decadence, make a double lap. Ravelstein likes a big tie-knot—after all, he is a large man."

But, on its face, the book is a mess. *Ravelstein* is sadly disjointed, cobbled

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with transitions like: "I must drop Paris now and get back to New Hampshire," "Morris Herbst, to get back to him," "But in continuing this narrative, I see that I have to begin by closing out Vera." Though Bellow told *Newsweek* of the energy brought back into his life in recent years, there are signs of real tiredness. When we get old, Graham Greene once said, we all write short. The memoir of Delmore Schwartz in *Humboldt's Gift* ran 471 tightly packed pages; the memoir of Allan Bloom in *Ravelstein* runs only 233 pages in large print. Especially in the middle chapters, paragraphs begin strong and sputter down into sentence fragments. Characters start out fresh and trail off into stock figures from the traditional Bellow repertory company. Reiteration sets in early: Ravelstein's head is always "melon-shaped," Rosamund's is always "pretty," and whole subordinate clauses are lifted up and attached to different sentences throughout the book. The narrating Chick is impossibly bifurcated: a "far from important sort" of writer (in order to allow Ravelstein to dominate), of whom it can also be said that "being seen in public with you was worth a lot" to a social-climbing Romanian intellectual refugee named Grielescu.

Such minor incoherencies, however, are relatively unimportant, except insofar as they mask the deeper incoherence of Bellow's project. *Humboldt's Gift* had its elegiac moments: "They were all gone but ourselves" (the line at the end of the novel as the narrating Charlie Citrine and his wife stand above Humboldt's grave) belongs to the classic tradition of *Ubi Sunt* poetry. But *Humboldt's Gift* really aimed only at being a successful novel. Saul Bellow, I think, knew Allan Bloom better than he knew Delmore Schwartz—loved him better, too—and he wants *Ravelstein* to be *both* a novel and an elegy, forgetting that novels are not, in the end, good devices for elegy. Some of the awkward transitions in the book come directly from this, for continuous prose narrative quickly turns discontinuous when it attempts the tasks of poetry in memorializing the dead and expressing grief. The things Bellow does to make *Ravel-*

The Real Allan Bloom

A Memoir.

BY KENNETH R. WEINSTEIN

Courtesy the University of Chicago Chronicle.

Since Allan Bloom died on October 7, 1992, those of us who knew him and studied with him have felt his loss like a wound. *Ravelstein*, Saul Bellow's novel based on Bloom, reopens this wound and brings forth a confusing array of sentiments. But Bellow has it exactly right when he ends the novel by writing, "You don't easily give up a creature like Ravelstein to death."

In Abe Ravelstein, we do see our teacher: a stammering man, serving up unmatchable anecdotes, dirty jokes in French, Mel Brooks routines, and insights into the human condition. It is almost every inch the Bloom I knew. Reading *Ravelstein* brought me back to feeling like the insecure undergraduate who would knock on an apartment door at the Cloisters, to be welcomed by Bloom, smoke streaming from his nostrils, laughing his way through a phone call from Washington while Paris waited on hold.

Students, especially undergraduates, were the center of Bloom's life. When *The Closing of the American Mind* became a bestseller in the spring of 1987 and Bloom was besieged by requests for interviews and speeches, he neither canceled a class nor missed an appointment—something other professors do with alacrity. That year, I was studying at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques in Paris. (Bloom urged his students to study in France to enhance or temper—as the case required—their appreciation of American liberal democracy.) During spring break, Bloom came to Paris to launch the French edition of the book. He addressed the students at the Institut, noting how absurd he felt talking about his own writing, as he had spent his life teaching books by the greatest minds of the past. Afterwards, we went (as always) to the Café de Flore with three of Bloom's closest French friends, the economist Jean-Claude Casanova and the political theorists Pierre Manent and Pierre Hassner. The three of them asked Bloom how the book was faring in America. Bloom asked them how I was faring in France. Bloom cared so intensely about us that we felt we were not so much his students as his children.

Bloom was a "psychologist" in the classical sense: He sought to deepen souls while educating sentiments, to give us contact with greatness, to make us aware of the transcendent. Aristophanes, Plato, Shakespeare, and Rousseau were to help us think, to teach us how to lead our lives. Bloom put himself at the center by the sheer force of his observations. When teaching, Bloom never relied on old lesson plans; he always reread the texts, frequently in the early morning hours, taking notes and finding new insights along the way. Often you would arrive in class to learn that a phrase you had skimmed over was the key to interpreting a particular passage or book.

Each of Plato's dialogues, Bloom would note in class, constituted a

(continued on page 35)

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stein an elegy weaken it as a novel, and the things he does to make it a novel destroy it as elegy. Indeed, the novelistic elements end up turning the book into a far more cruel picture of Bloom and the homosexual life than reviewers have allowed themselves to admit—far more cruel, in fact, than Bellow himself seems to realize.

In my conversations with Bloom's friends, two themes—Ravelstein's demand (repeated nine times) that the narrating Chick write a memoir of their friendship, and the relation between Ravelstein and Chick's wife Rosamund—are invariably cited as the least accurate in *Ravelstein*. But Bellow has an absolute need for both. Ravelstein's command is the device and the invariable signal by which Bellow turns back from his novel to his elegy, and Rosamund is the figure by which he tries to build a novel. What unity the book has derives from its narrative of a writer's attempt, as he travels with his new wife, to write a book about his dead friend.

From the beginning, novelistic elements abound. The fiction writer's hand shows through in the names he chooses: the tangled skein of "Ravelstein," the innocence of "Chick," the womanhood of the Shakespearean "Rosamund." Much of *Ravelstein* recounts real incidents from the lives of Bloom and Bellow, but only in the sense of *trouvailles*, the found objects and details by which an artist reveals his artistic eye. The opening chapter mentions the true story of green parrots that escaped their cages and began to breed in Chicago—but the novelist eventually transforms it into an image for Chick's trip to the Caribbean, for Ravelstein's chattering life of talk, for the ability of the exotic to flourish in the midst of the mundane, and for the richness and strangeness of the world.

In the opening of *Ravelstein*, these elements intrude only a little, small signals that more is coming in the later chapters. "Be as hard on me as you like," Ravelstein tells him, "without softeners or sweeteners." But Chick recognizes that, insofar as he has been called upon to write even an unsentimental elegy, he cannot make real moral evaluations: "In my trade you have to make more allowances, taking all sorts of ambiguities into account—to avoid hard-edged judgments."

Above: UPI / Corbis-Bettmann. Below: Viking Press.

Saul Bellow in 1976 and 2000.

As the book develops and the novelistic elements come to the fore, however, the novel itself begins to make the judgment its narrator refuses. In the last chapter of his posthumous volume *Love and Friendship*, Bloom observed, "The Eros of the soul can never be understood as a mere borrowing from the Eros of the body"—which is the point many of *Ravelstein*'s critics claim Bellow misses in presenting Bloom's eccentric exterior without fully conveying the intellectual interior that made him, in some sense, a great man.

But then, in his final paragraph, Bloom wrote, "Love and friendship each make a demand of loyalty and exclusivity that is likely to bring them into conflict." And this line Bellow doesn't miss. Wrapped around the topic of death, it becomes the fundamental theme of his novel: the difference between the love of a wife and the friendship of a man.

It is only after his own illness that Chick finds the will to fulfill his promise to Ravelstein, for when Chick comes near to dying after eating bad fish, he is rendered at last just like Ravelstein (as Bellow insists with somewhat heavy-handed parallel scenes set in hospital rooms). But from the beginning a difference between the mortality of Ravelstein and Chick has been signaled. In the first chapter, as he takes Chick shopping in the expensive shops of Paris, Ravelstein worries that the green corduroy fedora he has picked out for Chick "may be too heavy for June." "Well," Chick replies, "I expect to be still alive in October."

The difference turns out to be Rosamund: "I did not feel myself to be in the threatened category for I'd fallen in love with a young woman and married her." On vacation, immediately before he becomes ill, Chick writes, "As Rosamund in her lovely voice sang 'Live-for-ever,' I thought of Ravelstein in his grave, all his gifts, his endlessly diverting character, and his intellect entirely motionless."

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There are several passages in the novel about the necessity to preserve the memory of the dead. Chick can write, in a typical moment, "Many people want to be rid of the dead. I, on the contrary, have a way of hanging on to them." But this need to keep the dead alive is subordinated to the theme of the life-providing love of a wife. In the hospital, "survival was not a likely option," but "Rosamund was keeping me on this side of the death-line"—the death-line Ravelstein, with all his vitality, could not stop himself from crossing, because of the AIDS he had contracted from homosexual encounters with "rent-boys" and casual lovers.

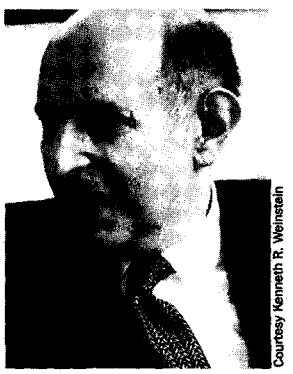
This is the corner into which Bellow has painted himself, and it is what lies behind the most awkward—and revealing—transition in *Ravelstein*, the turn to the continuous-present narration with which the book ends: "But I would rather see Ravelstein again than explain matters it doesn't help to explain." In the paragraph immediately before this, Chick breaks into a deeply embarrassing sentimentality about his wife, which is, I'm afraid, Bellow talking about his own wife and the difference between himself and Allan Bloom:

> Rosamund kept me from dying. I can't represent that without taking it on frontally and I can't take it on frontally while my interests remain centered on Ravelstein. Rosamund had studied love—Rousseauan romantic love and the Platonic Eros as well, with Ravelstein—but she knew far more about it than either her teacher or her husband.

As *Ravelstein* returns in its final pages to memorializing, it becomes again what it had been at the beginning: an elegy for male friendship and an attempt to maintain the memory of those who have gone before. But the novel in between is a paean to female love and a declaration of what such love brings that friendship never can. Bellow is our last survivor, and *Ravelstein* is a book about surviving. But it's a very sad one, for it teaches more than its author must have intended when he decided to intrude a hymn to his young wife into a memorial to his dead friend: Love lives, but friendship dies. ♦

whole; every single action and reference in those dialogues pointed to a deeper and more complicated meaning. In conversation, Bloom would mull over every word he uttered.

One of his favorite didactic methods was to ask your opinion of some action taken by an acquaintance or a literary character—when, in fact, what he was doing was bringing you to a deeper awareness of yourself. The truths that he taught through this indirect method, both about character and intellectual limitations, were often too painful to be shared with others. Attempting to assert one's independence from Bloom often led one only to realize how much of that independence was owed to the man in the first place.


Courtesy Kenneth R. Weinstein

In bringing back these memories, *Ravelstein* reminds us how much richer our world was with Bloom as our teacher. Nonetheless, the book is radically incomplete. Bloom's intellectual vitality, which drew some of the finest minds in America and Europe to his side, does not really shine through. To understand Bloom more fully, one needs to read *The Closing of the American Mind*, which offers his account of the state of our souls, and *Love and Friendship*, his journey through classical antiquity, Shakespeare, and modernity, which shows what we have forsaken in the name of sexual liberation.

Rather than serving up Bloom's thought, Bellow expounds upon the man's colorful habits, including his taste for luxury goods. Bellow captures the way this acquisitiveness coexisted with an "aristocrat's indifference to material things," as one former student put it. Bloom regularly burned cigarette holes in his neckties and shirts, spilled coffee and soup on his custom-made suits and fountain pen ink on his furniture. But without a clear understanding that Bloom's acquisition of Lalique crystal or Lanvin jackets was a lighthearted reflection of his love for beauty itself—the form of Beauty, in Plato's sense—he comes off in *Ravelstein* as merely a high-end consumer, an American fop on the Faubourg St. Honoré.

To dwell on Ravelstein's Paris shopping sprees, as Bellow does, risks leaving the impression that Bloom viewed Paris largely as a duty-free shopping center. Instead, it was for him the failing heart of a once great culture, the place on earth where the remnants of greatness could best be sensed. An hour or two of strolling the streets conversing with Bloom brought you a greater feeling for this lost world than hundreds of hours reading—not to mention a vivid introduction to the works of Stendhal, Balzac, and Rousseau. His days in Paris were filled with discussions with everyone from taxi drivers and hotel clerks to Raymond Aron and François Furet.

The chief distraction in the book is the fact that *Ravelstein* shatters the dignity with which Bloom maintained the privacy of his personal life and, as such, will engender a reductio ad homosexualum of Bloom's thought that he would have detested. Ravelstein's death from AIDS is especially troubling. Bellow recently acknowledged that Bloom never spoke with him about having AIDS or HIV. Why then suggest that he did?

Allan Bloom was an extraordinarily complex man. *Ravelstein* presents a moving portrait of the external Bloom, especially the energetic and boisterous dinner companion. But in failing to present the life of his never-closed mind, the novel cannot capture the real Allan Bloom—or the reason so many of us found in him the teacher who shaped our souls. ♦

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What I Saw at the Impeachment

Schmidt and Weisskopf on Clinton v. Starr.

BY STEPHEN BATES

If William Jefferson Clinton's advice in 1991 to Gennifer Flowers was "deny, deny, deny," the administration's approach in 1998 to Kenneth Starr's office, where I worked as an associate independent counsel, was "delay, delay, delay." Now, in *Truth at Any Cost*, Susan Schmidt of the *Washington Post* and Michael Weisskopf of *Time* provide a comprehensive, fine-grained, and occasionally infuriating account of what we were up against.

Truth at Any Cost
Ken Starr and the Unmaking of Bill Clinton
by Susan Schmidt and Michael Weisskopf
HarperCollins, 326 pp., $26

Clinton's lawyers, the government ones and the private ones alike, withheld everything they could. Even before the Lewinsky investigation, the authors note, our subpoenas met with what deputy chief of staff Harold Ickes approvingly called a "foot-dragging, f—k-you attitude." "If they want it," said David Kendall, Bill and Hillary Clinton's private lawyer, "they can litigate for it." We did litigate, and we mostly won, but the court fights consumed time and resources—giving Clinton defenders a foothold for complaining that the investigation was too lengthy and too costly.

In 1998, the White House stretched executive privilege beyond the bounds of plausibility. A privilege meant to protect discussions between the president and key advisers now was invoked to shield conversations between Sidney Blumenthal and Hillary Rodham Clinton, Bruce Lindsey and Vernon Jordan, and deputy White House counsel Cheryl Mills and the private attorneys representing various witnesses. The Mills invocation was an especially brazen transformation of public attorneys into private defense counsel, but that distinction never interested the president. "In a very real and significant way, the objectives of William J. Clinton, the person, and his Administration (the Clinton White House) are one and the same," Clinton's private lawyers asserted in a court brief.

The administration also invoked a heretofore-unheard-of "protective function privilege" to keep Secret Service personnel from testifying. Justice Department officials believed that the putative privilege was a sure loser—the deputy attorney general calculated a 5 percent chance of prevailing in court—but they litigated it as far as they could. The Secret Service director went around town, predicting that, without such a privilege, presidents would push away their bodyguards and thereby become vulnerable to assassins.

While we fought the dubious privileges in court, White House aides and allies were spreading muck, much of it false, about Starr and his prosecutors. The attack strategy, the authors write, dates back to early 1996, when Hillary Clinton "wanted to get tough." Mrs. Clinton had been hauled before the grand jury, her former Whitewater partners were on trial in Little Rock, and she'd had enough. Ickes oversaw the initial assault. "We have to damage this a—hole," Ickes told colleagues. "Everything is fair game."

So when the Lewinsky scandal broke, Clinton's lawyers, aides, defenders, wife, and Cajun consultant James Carville all knew instantly—"Starr had to be demonized." In Texas, private detectives scrounged for dirt on the independent counsel's late father. Carville, according to a memo quoted in the book, already was examining Starr's "public records/voting, driving, court records, deeds, mortgages." Now, Carville recorded phone conversations (shades of Linda Tripp!) about "the sexual and personal backgrounds of investigators." Although Carville denied having circulated these tidbits, Clinton allies did spread the baseless rumor that Starr was having an affair. "KENNETH STARR HAS A HONEY right here in town," Little Rock writer Gene Lyons gleefully reported in an e-mail to Carville (Lyons told the authors he didn't believe the rumor; he was just passing it on). For his part, Sidney Blumenthal wasn't satisfied with merely sullying the independent counsel. At a dinner party, according to the book, Blumenthal declared: "We want to put Ken Starr in jail."

The demonization took its toll. In the public eye, Starr, the cerebral and esteemed former appellate judge and solicitor general, became a monomaniac, a zealot, and a fanatic intent on driving (as Carville put it) "all the sodomites and fornicators out of town." What began as a legitimate, professional criminal investigation soon was viewed as pure politics—and, in that realm, the Clintons were unbeatable. "To many people, it began to seem as if Starr, not Clinton, should be under investigation."

Prodded by Clinton's lawyers and allies, several institutions proposed to do just that. The Justice Department repeatedly threatened to launch an inquiry, twice publicizing its intent to investigate, which further enfeebled the office at key moments. The counsel for the District of Columbia's bar asso-

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THE STARR REPORT

The FINDINGS *of*
INDEPENDENT COUNSEL
KENNETH W. STARR
on
PRESIDENT CLINTON
and
The LEWINSKY
AFFAIR

WITH ANALYSIS BY THE STAFF OF
The Washington Post

AP / Wide-World Photos

Kenneth Starr, the Starr Report, and President Clinton during his videotaped testimony to the grand jury investigating the Monica Lewinsky affair.

ciation subjected Starr and staff to a stream of demoralizing and time-consuming inquiries, word of which also reached the press. The bar counsel's ethical hypersensitivity evidently didn't extend to his own conduct: While pestering us, he was, according to Schmidt and Weisskopf, applying for a high-level Justice Department job.

Meanwhile, Clinton's lawyers ran a shadow grand jury, closely tracking the investigation by debriefing White House aides and other friendly witnesses. Some witnesses wrote down each question in the grand jury room; others raced out to talk with their attorneys every few minutes. The Clinton lawyers, public and private, created informal joint-defense agreements, enabling them to share this information without breaching attorney-client privilege. Somehow the president's lawyers stayed atop the testimony and pending testimony of Secret Service witnesses, too. And, the authors assert, Lewinsky's co-counsel, Nate Speights, kept Clinton's lawyers apprised of her thinking during the early months.

While *Truth at Any Cost* doesn't offer much new information about Clinton himself, there is one astonishing tale. According to Schmidt and Weisskopf, Tony Campolo, the evangelical minister who ultimately became part of Clinton's highly visible spiritual troika, spent a night in the White House in early February 1998. The next day he told two friends: "He did it, the president confessed to me completely." Campolo asked for advice on how to respond. The friends urged him to emulate the Old Testament's Nathan, who persuaded King David to repent. In the book's telling: "Campolo threw up his hands. 'Every time I go in to play Nathan,' he said, 'I end up playing Barnabas'—a New Testament figure known for encouragement and comfort."

Whomever Campolo ended up emulating, Clinton spent another six months publicly denying any sexual contact with Lewinsky, while his private detectives quietly gathered dirt on the former intern in case Clinton needed to cast her as a liar or worse. (The authors attribute this anecdote to the two friends who heard it from him, though Campolo himself denies having made the remarks.)

Schmidt and Weisskopf also recount the roller-coaster existence of the independent counsel's lawyers in 1998, based on interviews with twenty-five members of the staff (I was one of the few who declined). The authors capture the collective shock and despondency when an article by Steven Brill accused the office of unlawful leaks. They describe the major internal disputes: the six-month-long fight over whether to immunize Lewinsky or indict her, and the battle over the timing of the impeachment report. (In mid-July, still reeling from the Brill debacle, Starr and one or two others wanted to get it to Congress by the end of the month, before we had questioned Lewinsky or the president, but everyone else said the evidence was too flimsy.) Despite a few glitches—misspelled names, erroneous dates, chronological elisions, and the like—the authors get the big picture right.

At times, though, they seem to be captive to sources who view past events through the dual lenses of hindsight and self-regard. When decisions worked

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out well, in this account, we were following a careful strategy; when things went awry, we failed to heed someone's wise counsel. As Sam Dash once said to me, "Memory is a funny thing."

Though scathing in its portrayal of Dash, our ethics consultant who resigned in protest, the book paints admiring portraits of staff lawyers. Of the three Washington-based deputies, for instance, Jackie Bennett is a "fearsome interrogator," "aggressive but prudent," "charismatic," "experienced and savvy," "funny and personable, the rare sort who could cite passages from a Norwegian novel one minute and curse like a longshoreman the next." Sol Wisenberg, though "disheveled and disorganized," is "a puzzlemaster with an elephantine memory for detail." And Bob Bittman, though "brusque," is "efficient and disciplined"—and a "first-rate golfer" to boot. No wonder internal battles were fiercely fought: The combatants were "men with egos as big as their reputations."

Schmidt and Weisskopf also interviewed Starr ("ten sessions of several hours each") as well as his wife, relatives, friends, associates, and one of his high school teachers, and they weave a good deal of his biographical background through their account. Their portrait is fairly critical. They deem him self-disciplined, brainy, "a formidable litigator," but also self-righteous ("believed in his own rectitude"), gullible ("suckered" by Webster Hubbell), and stubborn ("his perfectionism became an occupational hazard"), inclined to pedantry, hubris, and "self-destructive choices."

While more nuanced than the cartoonish depictions given in recent books by Bob Woodward, Jeffrey Toobin, and the team of Joe Conason and Gene Lyons, Schmidt and Weisskopf's view of Starr strikes me as inequitable, especially when contrasted with the upbeat depictions of his staff. As the book compellingly attests, the independent counsel's actions were the product of group decision-making.

That group had its frailties and blind spots, especially when it came to anticipating how the public would construe our actions. Some advice to Starr (including, at times, my own) was woefully wrongheaded. But the authors seem reluctant to blame the underlings.

Did our various missteps affect the ultimate outcome? I doubt it. Bill Clinton didn't just have an affair with a subordinate; he assigned Betty Currie to choreograph it. He didn't just lie under oath; he tried to get Currie and Lewinsky to lie. He didn't just get rid of subpoenaed evidence; he dispatched Currie to take a box from Lewinsky and hide it. When he told Dick Morris not to hold a news conference attacking Lewinsky, it wasn't because he cared for her; it was because "there's some slight chance that she may not be cooperating with Starr and we don't want to alienate her."

Clinton told Lewinsky that she could have any White House job she wanted after the 1996 election. He told Currie that he and Lewinsky were never alone, that he never touched her, and that he rebuffed her sexual advance—remarks that he later characterized, under oath, as an effort "to quickly refresh my memory."

He told Blumenthal that Lewinsky had made a "sexual demand," which he had rebuffed, during what he suggested was a "ministering" session. (Blumenthal urged him to quit ministering to troubled individuals, but the president replied, "It's very difficult for me to do that, given how I am. I want to help people.")

When reporters asked about executive privilege, Clinton said he was out of the loop ("I haven't discussed that with the lawyers. I don't know. You should ask someone who knows"), though the White House counsel, in a sealed affidavit filed a week earlier, swore that the president had directed him to invoke it.

In his battle against Ken Starr as in so much else, Bill Clinton was willing to do and say whatever it took. "When this thing is over," he told friends in 1998, according to the *New Yorker*, "there's going to be only one of us left standing. And it's going to be me." He was right. The best politician won, and the best man lost. ♦

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Lucian Freud, After Chardin (1999). Courtesy Aquavella Gallery.

Art and Its Discontents

Lucian Freud's recent work. BY ROGER KIMBALL

I have never been a particular fan of Lucian Freud's painting. On the contrary, I have always thought there was something distinctly repulsive about it.

I know this is a minority view. Since his emergence on the art scene in the mid-1940s, Lucian Freud has had an enthusiastic claque. Over the last twenty years, in particular, important critics have fallen over themselves to praise his work. In 1982, Lawrence Gowing wrote an admiring monograph on Freud's work—thus certifying Freud's reputation among the cognoscenti—and, more recently, Robert Hughes expatiated at length about Freud's "old master" touch. The names of Velázquez and Rembrandt are regularly cited as precedents. With Lucian Freud, the established view runs these days, greatness once more walks among us. The fact that this greatness comes with a decided kink only increases its market value. Not for nothing is Lucian the grandson of Sigmund.

Freud's paintings of naked people have garnered the most extravagant praise. "As the barriers are broken down," one critic wrote in 1993, "these pictures as a group acquire some legacy of punk, clubland, drugs, and the generally non-achievement-bound spending of youth, with its mixed attraction to androgyny and eruptions of supremely gendered eroticism."

"Eruptions of supremely gendered eroticism"? Whenever critics erupt in such supremely pretentious absurdity, it's always a sign that an artist has ascended into the art world's limelight. But, in fact, Freud's paintings of naked people represent the worst side of his *oeuvre*. (His still lifes have always had more to recommend them.) Freud paints people without their clothes not to reveal them, but to expose them. There is something aggressive and obscene about his handling of flesh. He emphasizes the raw animality of his subjects, as his pictures of naked people lying on a bed with a dog underscore.

Kenneth Clark once distinguished between "naked"—unclothed and thus liable to shame—and "nude"—unclothed and thus closer to the human ideal. Freud never paints nudes in Clark's sense. Quite the reverse: He isolates and champions the brutish side of humanity. That is why Freud's "supremely gendered eroticism" is decidedly unaphrodisiac. If there is something shocking about Freud's pictures of naked people, it is not their eroticism but their blank fleshiness. Sex in these pictures is urgent, ineluctable, and thoroughly unsexy. Freud once suggested that "a life of absolute self-indulgence" was his "discipline." His paintings of naked people are souvenirs.

In the *Poetics*, Aristotle speaks of "the example of good portrait painters, who reproduce the distinctive features of a man, and at the same time, without losing the likeness, make him handsomer than he is." This has not been the procedure of Lucian Freud. (Nor, it should be added, of much modern art.) An exhibition, *Lucian Freud: Recent Work 1997-2000*, is now showing at the Acquavella Gallery in New York, and many of the thirty-odd pictures on view reveal the painter in all his accustomed nastiness.

But there is a new element in several pictures that marks a welcome departure for the seventy-eight-year-old artist. *Armchair by the Fireplace* (1997) and other still lifes possess a quiet dignity that one does not generally associate with Freud. Even more surprising are some portraits. A handful of Freud's depictions of a young Irishman exhibit the kind of respect and reticence that, instead of invading a character, allows it to unfold. His *Head of a Naked Girl* (1999), though characteristically gritty, has a pathos that borders on a most un-Freudian sentiment: tenderness.

Tenderness is also in evidence in what are perhaps the most surprising pictures in this exhibition, a pair of works inspired by a painting by Jean Baptiste Siméon Chardin, the eighteenth-century French master of small scenes of domestic life. The large version reveals what the small detail only hints at: The subject is a mother teaching her young child to read. There is an element of human solicitude here—as well as a calmer, more modulated application of paint—that shows a side of Freud that has hitherto been kept hidden. Perhaps it is a sign of a late flowering into maturity after a (very much) protracted adolescence; or perhaps it suggests that Freud's discipline of absolute self-indulgence may not be absolute, after all. ♦

Roger Kimball is managing editor of the New Criterion.

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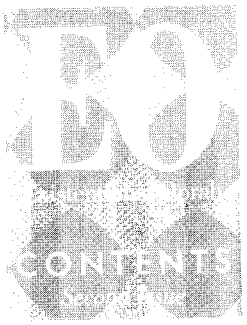


A Monthly Journal on the Meaninglessness of Existence

37 THE DAILY DOWNER Start Each Day with a Page from Sylvia Plath's Journals

59 PUT AWAY THAT SHOTGUN, GAS IS BACK!

62 OPRAH'S BOOK CLUB This Month, Oprah Talks Kierkegaard.

143 FASHION Brighten Your Wardrobe, Try Brown!

187 WANT TO KNOW WHAT'S ON TV THIS MONTH? Don't Bother, Just Sit in the Dark.

199 TRAVEL If It's February, This Must Be Northern Sweden.

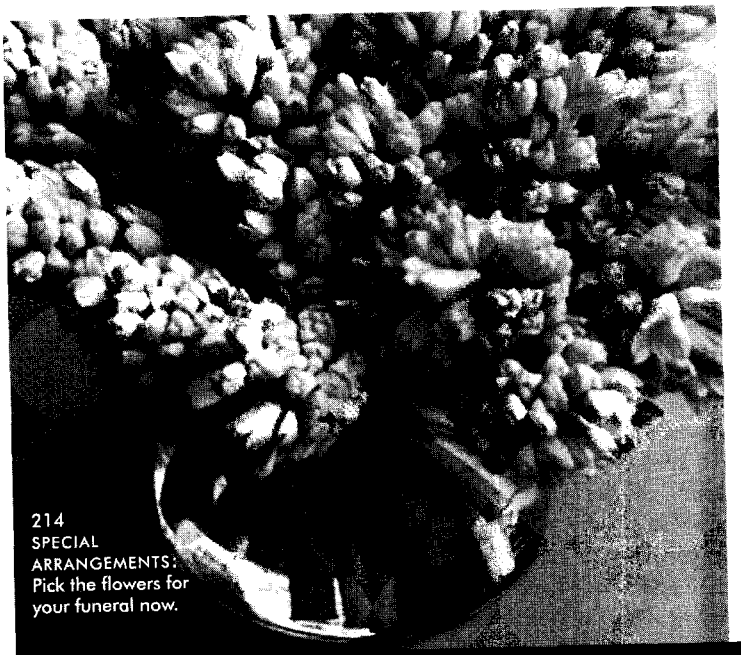
237 PERSONAL STYLE The Stationery You Choose For Your Suicide Note Says a Lot About You

238 ILLUMINATIONS You Don't Have To Be Sick To Live in a Hospice

250 FINAL THOUGHTS We Are All Alone In This World, Totally Alone

"I BELIEVE I'M HERE TO MAKE AS MUCH MONEY

261 WHAT OPRAH'S EATING: Find out what sandwich changed her life.



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Gains of Black Students in Voucher Schools

Paul E. Peterson is Henry Lee Shattuck Professor of Government, Harvard University; distinguished visiting fellow, Hoover Institution; and member, Hoover's Koret Task Force on K–12 Education.

In spring 1998, more than six thousand students in the District of Columbia and more than three thousand students in Dayton, Ohio, applied for privately funded school vouchers to attend the private school of their choice. The demand was so heavy that a lottery was used to allocate the vouchers. As a result, my colleagues and I had the opportunity to study voucher effectiveness by means of a randomized field trial.

The news is particularly good for black students. Six to seven months after entering their new private school, **low-income African American students scored higher in math and reading than those remaining in public schools.**

In Dayton, black students entering private school in grades 2 to 8 scored, on average, 7 national percentile points higher in math, and 5 points higher in reading, on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills than did black students in public schools. However, no gains from vouchers were observed for white students. In Washington, D. C., black students entering private schools in grades 2 to 5 outperformed, on average, black public school students by 6 points in math. (The black-white test score gap, on average, is around 25 percentile points.) The results from Dayton and D. C. suggest that the gap can be reduced by a fifth or more in one year, giving hope that the difference can be eliminated altogether after eleven years of schooling.

The results are not an unadulterated success story. Students in D. C. who switched to the private schools in grades 6 to 8 did not do as well the first year as their younger brothers and sisters. The older students scored 2 national percentile points higher in math but 8 points lower than their public school peers in reading.

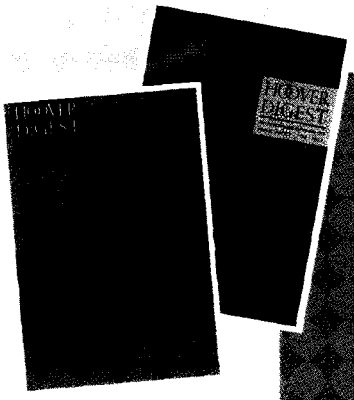
These older students also reported a variety of adjustment problems. Whereas younger students attending private schools are more likely than their public school peers to agree with the statement "students are proud to attend my school," the opposite is true for students in grades 6 to 8. A similar pattern is observed when students are asked what grade they would give their school, whether they like their school "a lot," and whether students "get along well with teachers." Suspension rates for younger students are similar in private and public schools but considerably higher in private schools for students in grades 6 to 8.

The overall results emphasize the importance of early intervention. Vouchers can work. **Parents of students at all grade levels report fewer discipline problems, more parental-school communications, and more homework.** Indeed, on the consumer satisfaction scale, vouchers are an overwhelming success.

But vouchers are not a magic wand that can be waved over any student, at any point in his or her school career, to produce an overnight solution. Education is a slow, painstaking process. "As the twig is bent, so the tree will grow," goes the familiar adage. It's time for the voucher debate to realize this. It is also time for those who represent blacks to take a close look at who benefits the most from school choice.

— Paul E. Peterson

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.



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